

It is time and again seen that women masses do come in a tide to participate in revolutionary movements producing some potential women leaders. But this tide along with the prospective women leaders seems to recede once the revolution is completed or is defeated. The chief reason behind this phenomenon is the existence of the concept of private property. As long as private property remains women will always have to go back to tend individual household activities, maintaining private property for men, no matter how many social revolutions take place. Hence the concept of continuous revolution until one reaches communism has strategic relevance for women, because it is only then that private property gets abolished, unleashing the creativity of women.

Kersplebedeb  
CP 63560  
CCCP Van Horne  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada  
H3W 3H8

email: [info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com)  
web: <http://www.kersplebedeb.com>

**KER  
SPLE  
DEB  
DEB**

# People's War... Women's War?



**two texts by Comrade Parvati of the  
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)  
with commentary by Butch Lee**





***Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain, by Butch Lee & Red Rover***

The transformation to a neo-colonial world has only begun, but it promises to be as dramatic, as disorienting a change as was the original european colonial conquest of the human race. Capitalism is again ripping apart & reconstructing the world, and nothing will be the same. Not race, not nation, not gender, and certainly not whatever culture you used to have.

Now you have outcast groups as diverse as the Aryan Nation and the Queer Nation and the Hip Hop Nation publicly rejecting the right of the u.s. government to rule them...

All the building blocks of human culture - race, gender, nation, and especially class - are being transformed under great pressure to embody the spirit of this neo-colonial age.

-from Preface to Night-Vision

"Night-Vision was so compelling to me because it has a spirit of militancy which reformist feminism tries to kill. It has that raw, unmediated truth-telling which I think we are going to need in order to deal with the fascism that's upon us."

- bell hooks,  
critical theorist

# People's War... Women's War?



**two texts by Comrade Parvati of the  
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)  
with commentary by Butch Lee**



Available from Kersplebedeb. CP 63560. CCCP Van Horne, Montreal.  
Quebec, Canada, H3W 3H8 or email: [info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com)

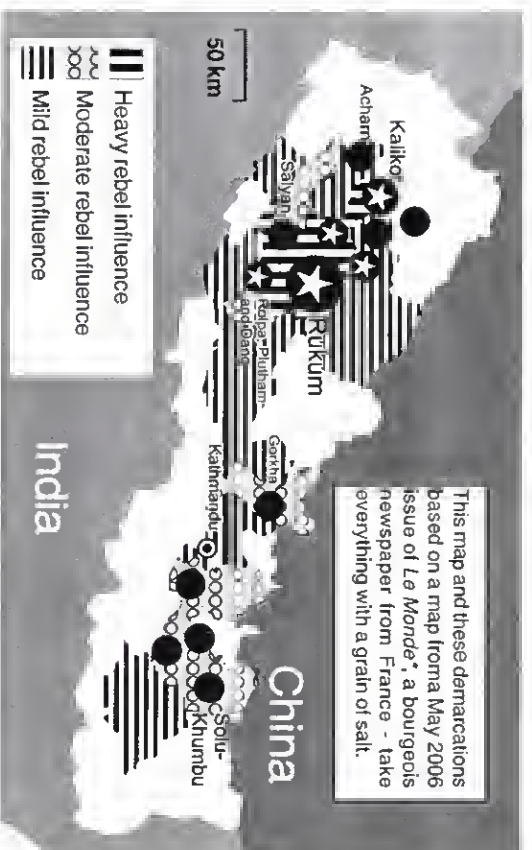
oppressed need the right to be angry, to smash everything they've had to endure. To come together and take power into their own hands. That's what Mao was trying to get across to Communist cadres.

In his list of all the evils and harassments they've had to endure, nowhere did Mao write that Communist should be the armed enforcers or new cops with whatever rules for peasant villages. Rather the opposite. He wrote that they must argue their own politics but stand back and let the villagers themselves go through the process of discussing and thinking these issues through. And then collectively acting themselves as a politicized community on their decisions. Mao even thought that the many armed criminal gangs about should be taken care of by the organized peasants themselves — if you can't handle some crimes how can you overthrow the government? Mao had tough thinking, in 3-D, on this.

To me there's a poisonous connection between a party leadership which flirts with a patriarchal cult of the individual, which on some days thinks that "one-man leadership" is a good thing, and miseducated peasant guerrillas who have gotten the macho idea that because they have guns they should be a new state police. Instead of letting the oppressed take over society and helping them remake it in their own image.

Prostitution is neither victimless nor a crime by the women and children involved. For Mao prostitution was "a contradiction among the people", to be resolved peacefully with new socialist culture. Easier to say than do, especially when any male culture no matter how "new" or "revolutionary" its wrapping can only be old. Like forcing women to obey orders by beating them. While any truly new culture can only be women, communally by us and for us.

(the end for now)



Black Circles show regular rebel activity; Black Circles with stars show rebel strongholds

\* See [http://www.lemonde.fr/web/vi/0,4700,23216,54,7708,0\\_51784208,0.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/web/vi/0,4700,23216,54,7708,0_51784208,0.html)



There have been many other similar incidents reported in Nepal of Maoist guerrillas enforcing their brand of rural law and order. Schoolteachers accused of molesting students being disappeared, is just another example. Some of this is probably the confused fallout of giving guns to young people and telling them to go out and do good (the Peoples Liberation Army is very decentralized).

There is more than one political issue in this. There is no party policy in Nepal that anyone's heard of about attacking prostitutes, and doubtlessly many revolutionary women in Nepal were more than a little upset when they heard about that incident. But starting in the 1920s the Communist revolution among the peasant villages in Asia has defended their right to drive off what Mao called "tramps and vagabonds". And, yes, I know that this doesn't sound so good to liberal Western ears today (women like myself, for that matter, explicitly consider ourselves vagabonds in the world that men are destroying). But the whole meaning was radically different in that context. Desperately poor villagers ate only what they could save out of their own crops, and were often more than hungry. Dying of starvation and disease was common (just as it is in rural Nepal today). Those who did not produce themselves but wanted a share of production were parasitic. Defending your own food and space was a right to the oppressed. For the same reason that poor working class communities here in the U.S. want beggars, street alcoholics, drug sellers, as well as prostitutes, driven out. Because they are parasitic on the community, which is already hard pressed. It is middle-class intellectuals who are most comfortable with maintaining other peoples' "street culture" and want to romanticize it, because they aren't paying the very real price. And in the age of the global AIDS plague, when prostitution in Africa for example has already led to millions of deaths, we no longer think that these are "victimless crimes".

Does that mean that those Maoists who attacked the prostitutes (or the one's dragging off suspect schoolteachers) did the right thing from a Communist point of view? Nowhere even close to right. Not only were the guerrillas disoriented about protecting the male perps while beating the women victims, but they are doing the *opposite* of what Mao urged in these situations. Mao Zedong in the 1920-30s, whatever his mistakes, was trying to empower peasants who had lived beaten down and terrorized for their entire lives. Mao wanted them to make revolution, "which is not as gentle a thing as a tea party" as he often scolded well-behaved socialist intellectuals. The

## Introduction

by Kersplebedeb

In the midst of the Himalayas, covering an area roughly twice the size of Ireland with a population only slightly smaller than Canada's, until recently Nepal was a country that Westerners didn't really think about. Except as a series of exotic stereotypes. But that's all changing now.

The first anti-capitalist armed revolution in the world in twenty-five years has taken over the Nepali countryside and toppled the dictatorship of King Gyandha and his brutal Royal Army. The "Red" guerrillas of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have joined with the former legal opposition political parties to form a new secular republic. In a celebration and a showing of strength, the Maoists recently held a mass rally in Kathmandu, the capital, of over two hundred thousand Nepalis. Busloads of guerrilla supporters from remote villages and underground party militants from the cities jammed the streets, wearing new red Maoist t-shirts, plastering the capitol with Communist posters. Events are changing the political landscape in Nepal almost every day.

One thing hasn't changed, however. When the Maoist rebels and the interim anti-Royalist government leaders posed for the press on June 16th, after announcing their agreement to end the civil war, some forty-four faces are visible in the Reuters photograph of the successful negotiators. All of these faces are men (there are two obscured faces behind other participants who could be women). It hasn't even occurred to the "democratic" leaders of the new Nepal yet to fake it, to add women sprinkled here and there as window dressing. Now that's really backward by both capitalist and socialist standards, since faking it is what "democratic" politics is about.

But thousands of Nepali women have fought in the revolution as guerrillas. Thousands have risked death as underground organizers. Many were killed, captured and tortured, executed. The party lists of martyred women members are long. There is a woman who has spoken up for all these women, for her comrades and sisters. Comrade Parvati is a senior woman member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a member of both the party's central committee and politburo. Despite her years of being underground, Parvati has become one of the best-known revolutionary women in

There are now objective grounds for developing women's leadership in all fronts. Realizing this, CPN (Maoist) has created a separate Women's Department under the Central Committee of the Party. The function of this department is to make policies to develop women's potentialities to higher levels so that more and more women are able to reach policy making bodies in all the three fronts; Party, Army and United Front.

### **The question of women's leadership in CPN (Maoist)**

The question of women's leadership became more and more important in Nepal as revolutionary united fronts were replacing the reactionary state machinery at village and district levels. It was seen that women were joining the movement in unprecedented numbers, showing tremendous endurance, sacrifice and devotion; however they lacked expert knowledge to lead the movement. With the establishment of a central level United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC) to co-ordinate the activities of all the united fronts at various levels, this question became all the more pertinent. Also with the creation of higher military formations within the People's Liberation Army, the question of women started being raised by the women themselves. This has become more important as military formations have now reached the level of Brigade, and there are separate women's platoon and sections with the brigade. It is seen that while men are continuing to develop in the military field even when they have reached beyond 40 years of age, women are hardly seen to continue in this field beyond 25 years. While from the field, objective conditions were demanding the need of developing women's leadership qualities from the women cadres, within the Party itself there was a theoretical debate on women's role in the communist movement. It was in the Second National Conference, in the process of analysis and synthesis of achievements of PW in Nepal which led to the adoption of Prachanda Path, that women's role in institutionalization of continuous revolution and their role in preventing counterrevolution were seriously discussed. In fact the creation of separate Women's Department is the product of Prachanda Path. Their role in the three instruments of revolution — Party, Army and United Front\* — was discussed. The Party being the most decisive amongst the three instruments, the question of developing revolutionary women leaders in Communist Party was given prominence.

\* United Front organizations is the term used for governing structures established in zones liberated by the CPN(M); Li Onesto such United Front organizations include representatives of the Party, the People's Liberation Army, and representatives elected from the masses.

So who was leading who about women?

And when we think of the anti-capitalist Beguine women's communities of feudal Europe or the indigenous matriarchies of the Seneca and other peoples here or the working class women revolutionaries of the 1871 Paris Commune, we know that communism or communalism didn't begin with some important men writing theory, however good it is. Parvati says it backwards. "Where do correct ideas come from?" They come from practice, from perceiving actual life. Then from struggle to change the world and then learning from what we have done or not done. And so on in endless dialectical chain of changing the world and changing ourselves.



*...for example, Jin Jiu, a Chinese feminist revolutionary, was killed following the failed Shanghai uprising she helped organize in 1907*

While it may look on the surface as though men have developed military science exclusively with women being only the ignorant bystanders, this science like all others has its beginnings from people's need to struggle with nature. The first struggle peoples have is always with nature. From hunting and trapping animals, hiding, using camouflage and deception, taking advantage of terrain, using tools in a wider and wider way, mapping and charting weather. Only then to managing social conflicts. So women have done it from time immemorial.

Among the 19th century Ibo women in what is called Nigeria, women going to market in other villages would always travel in at least pairs. Armed for defense against male attackers with their heavy wooden pestles used for grinding grains. Which were functionally the same as long clubs. To say nothing of the Amazons who have been present in the herstories of all peoples. Nepal and its predecessor kingdoms have been ruled in their long past by queens as well as kings, while modern peasant protests have seen landlords physically attacked by angry Nepali women.



In those very same years, in Mao's first major theoretical writing, his 1926 *Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society*, the word "women" does not appear a single time. Chinese women as a whole were completely missing from his analysis of society.

Wait, there's more. The next year, 1927, Mao Zedong was under attack from the party leadership for the idea that their revolution should be based in the rural peasantry not the cities. He wrote a now famous explanation of how rich politically the revolt among the desperate peasantry was: *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. In this historic revolutionary essay, Mao lists "fourteen great achievements" of the rebel peasant associations. He describes these fourteen achievements one by one. In number seven he tells of peasants freeing themselves from the four traditional "systems of authority". One of these four "authorities" in the "whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology" is "women...dominated by men (the authority of the husband)." So in a section of his essay, under one of the fourteen points, and within that point in only one of four listed subpoints, Mao finally tells us about peasant women for only a few sentences (like three or four). Literally. It turns out that women are rebelling, the apparently not that important half of all China's population.

Mao wrote that the old authorities of state and clan and superstition and "the authority of the husband all begin to totter." That was it for Mao on this subject. So even here Mao Zedong marginalized women completely out of his discussion on the political struggle that they were fighting in. And at the end of this document, in his list of the goals of the Communist-led peasant struggle, not one demand is mentioned on the condition of women. Mass rape, forced marriage, foot-binding, semi-slavery within the patriarchal family, state repression of women, no right to own farms, were all injustices that revolutionary women were already fighting in 1920s China. All not in Mao's report. Mao was definitely following cautiously well behind the growing rebellion of Chinese women.



Mao was not the leader in regards to women but only a follower...

## The leadership question and women

Leadership is basically actualization of political ideology, hence in the Communist Party it is the command in ideology that determines the leadership quality. This quality is developed through continuous class struggle, inner-party struggle and inner-struggle. Hence real tested leadership can only come in countries where there is class struggle, where the Party thrives on healthy inner-party struggle demanding a higher level of transformation of individuals through relentless inner-struggle. Indeed Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Chiang Ching were all products of intense class struggle and inner-party struggle that was being waged in Germany, Russia and China in their time. And being women in addition, they had to wage a more complex inner-struggle than the men of their time.

The question of leadership is also linked to objective necessity and the chance factor. In the dialectical relationship between the two, it is true that the objective condition necessitates birth of a leader but the question of who emerges as a leader is left to chance. It is here that the women's leadership question becomes slightly complicated. It is seen that revolutionary communist movements have always unleashed women's fury, but they are not able to channelize this energy into producing enduring women communist leaders. The question has been raised again and again as to why there are so few women leaders in communist parties when Marxism offers such a deep penetrating analysis and solution to women's oppression. Hence the question arises as to why the chance factor is constrained in producing women leaders in communist parties despite growing objective conditions for it? This needs deep analysis.



In the practical front, this leads to spontaneity whereby women's issues are addressed but not implemented because one leaves it to circumstances, leading to gradualism. Often it is seen that the party does not actively intervene in the existing traditional division of labor between men and women whereby men take to mental work while women are left to do physical labor. This is also manifested in taking men and women as absolute equals by not being sensitive to women's special condition and their special needs. This becomes all the more apparent when women are menstruating or are in the reproductive period.

### **Lack of subjective effort on the part of women cadres**

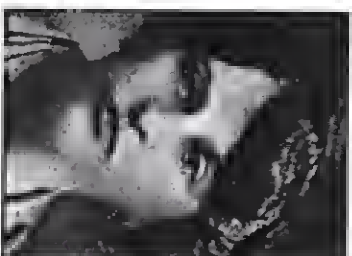
Women have to wage a longer struggle because of their double oppression. However due to lack of subjective efforts they lose half way. For example, where they have successfully rebelled against feudal values, they have not been able to sustain themselves in class struggle. And where they have been able to wage class struggle, they have not been able to sustain in inner-party struggle. And by not participating or participating poorly in inner-party struggle they lose sharpness on ideology, thus robbing them of their chance to determine the course of the communist movement, which has so much relevance to their own liberation. Their lack of subjective effort is manifest in many ways. In the field of ideology, they fall prey to pragmatism, economism, sectarianism because they are not serious enough to study theoretical knowledge and be involved in inner-party struggle to overcome their objective conditions, which in turn breeds these tendencies because of their past objective conditions.



ethood as the important role for women: "The dogmatic-revisionist tendency is seen by romanticizing the bearing of children as yet another front where women can prove their mettle in class struggle. But in practice, all this revolutionary romanticism loses its heat when the practical problems of bearing and bringing up children start hindering the combat life of the cadres amidst fierce class struggle. This eventually results in women to take back seat in the revolutionary movement."

Along this line, it is telling that comrade Parvati repeatedly holds up "fine women communist leaders like Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Inessa Armand, Krupskaya, etc." To those not familiar with Marxist-Leninist (Male) culture, this lineup is highly unlikely. Two of these, Kollontai and Armand, are rarely held up as models or praised as leaders. Both Russian Old Bolsheviks, both are also known as leading advocates of "free love" and opponents of marriage. In addition, Kollontai was a leader of the Workers Opposition in the early 1920s. Which opposed the party leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, etc. as building a new state bureaucracy over the working class. Armand led in the Communist relief efforts during the famine of their civil war and died doing that. She put her beliefs about "free love" into practice by becoming Lenin's lover. Scandalizing the Bolshevik leadership. To knowingly praise them as leaders, as Parvati does, is to make a point that pushes at the boundaries of women's role within men's revolutions.

The obvious conclusion is that the liberation of women demands an end to marriage in any form that we've known, just as a start. Of course, Parvati does not say this. It would fly in the face of her party's line and perhaps her own beliefs. Parvati does speak to the press about reading books together and otherwise enjoying her relationship to Bhattarai. So at a later point in her article she adds a balancing discussion of "good" Communist marriages. Her examples of correct marriages almost all



*Inessa Armand: breaking the boys' rules*

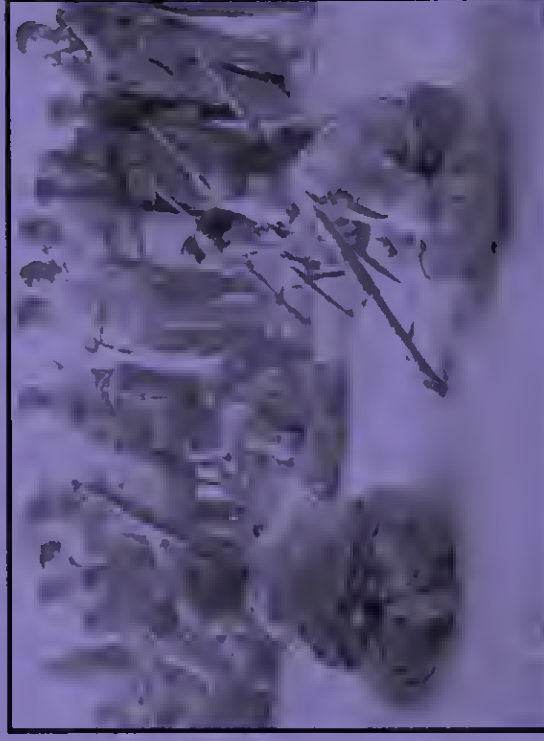


*Com. Parvati & husband Bhattarai*



It is time and again seen that women masses do come in a tide to participate in revolutionary movements producing some potential women leaders. But this tide along with the prospective women leaders seems to recede once the revolution is completed or is defeated. The chief reason behind this phenomenon is the existence of the concept of private property. As long as private property remains women will always have to go back to tend individual household activities, maintaining private property for men, no matter how many social revolutions take place. Hence the concept of continuous revolution until one reaches communism has strategic relevance for women, because it is only then that private property gets abolished, unleashing the creativity of women.

# People's War... Women's War?



**two texts by Comrade Parvati of the  
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)  
with commentary by Butch Lee**



**KERSPLEBEB  
SPLEBEB  
DEB**

Kersplebedeb  
CP 63560  
CCCP Van Home  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada  
H3W 3H8

email: [info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com)  
web: <http://www.kersplebedeb.com>



***Night-Vision: Illuminating War & Class on the Neo-Colonial Terrain, by Butch Lee & Red Rover***

The transformation to a neo-colonial world has only begun, but it promises to be as dramatic, as disorienting a change as was the original european colonial conquest of the human race. Capitalism is again ripping apart & reconstructing the world, and nothing will be the same. Not race, not nation, not gender, and certainly not whatever culture you used to have.

Now you have outcast groups as diverse as the Aryan Nation and the Queer Nation and the Hip Hop Nation publicly rejecting the right of the u.s. government to rule them...

All the building blocks of human culture - race, gender, nation, and especially class - are being transformed under great pressure to embody the spirit of this neo-colonial age.

-from Preface to Night-Vision

"Night-Vision was so compelling to me because it has a spirit of militancy which reformist feminism tries to kill. It has that raw, unmediated truth-telling which I think we are going to need in order to deal with the fascism that's upon us."

- bell hooks,  
critical theorist

# People's War... Women's War?



**two texts by Comrade Parvati of the  
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)  
with commentary by Butch Lee**



Available from Kersplebedeb. CP 63560, CCCP Van Horne, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3W 3H8 or email: [info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com)



# of Women and Children

People's War... Women's War? two texts by Comrade Parvati of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) with commentary by Butch Lee

ISBN 1-894946-21-9

Kersplebedeb 2006

This and other radical books and pamphlets available from:

Kersplebedeb  
CP 63560  
CCCP Van Home  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada  
H3W 3H8

The text "The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal" was taken from the *Monthly Review* website at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/0203parvati.htm> and the *People's March* interview with Comrade Parvati was taken from the *People's March* website at <http://www.peoplesmarch.com/archives/2004/oct2/k4/interview.htm>. The PM website was suppressed by the Indian State in May 2006, and a new site has been announced at <http://peoplesmarch.googlepages.com> yet this interview has not been uploaded as of this date. The *People's March* interview was very lightly edited by Kersplebedeb in order to correct a small number of typos - the original uncorrected text is available upon request.

This booklet has been published with the understanding that the two texts by Comrade Parvati are copyright.

Various photos came from various sources, but a special note of appreciation is due to the members of the First International Road Building Brigade to Rolpa District, Nepal for use of the photos on page 10 (bottom right), 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 29, 30, 32 and 43. The fact that members from the Brigade were so helpful and willing to share their photos, even though they knew that they would not necessarily agree with all of the political positions expressed in this booklet, is a good example of what non-sectarian solidarity can mean. A report from the Brigade on their trip to Nepal in 2005 can be found at <http://www.pcr-ricpcanada.org/nepal/report.pdf>. A summary of, and thoughts on, a talk given by a member of the Brigade can be found on the Sketchy Thoughts blog at: <http://sketchythoughts.blogspot.com/2006/03/revolution-in-nepal.html>

It must be stressed that this publication is an initiative independent of the CPN(M) as well as any other organizations or individuals not explicitly mentioned.

Now, in this exploration, we are moving onto the ground of metapolitics. Wild, vast and more primal than the little, fenced-in suburban plots of what amerikka calls "politics". From the rape borellios of the Balkans to the mass murder by AIDS in Afrika, women are being pushed to understand men's society and, most importantly, ourselves, in a different way. The longest Amazon journey begins today."

What produces a system that bases its daily life on doing genocide? The answer is, a commodity civilization that formed itself through centuries of repressing its own "internal colony" of women, killing millions of us. How could sane Afrikans or Indians guess what this strange euro-capitalism would ultimately do? To white men, who were "made" by a social process in which they shared in the torturing and killing of their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, doing genocide against other peoples was no big deal at all. Just another day at the office.

Patriarchal imperialism is the only so-called civilization that has always used genocide as its primary fuel, its primary harvester. It ain't hard to spread the goodies on the banquet table and invite friends to dinner when you steal and kill the producers. And revolutionary women's culture begins when we leave the table.

Available for \$12 US plus \$5 postage from:

Kersplebedeb  
CP 63560  
CCCP Van Home  
Montreal, Quebec  
Canada  
H3W 3H8

Or email [info@kersplebedeb.com](mailto:info@kersplebedeb.com) or [bfishblues@hotmail.com](mailto:bfishblues@hotmail.com)

# The Military Strategy

Women and children's war against the armed rule of men is the most taboo thing there is. *Yet it is coming.* It is so taboo, so threatening, that not only do generals and popes and even bankers shrink from it, but even feminists, socialists, anarchists and national liberation movements try to suppress any thought of it. Still, it must come. Women's political violence is thought unnatural, a violation of the most basic sex roles, contrary to the social customs of ages, almost unthinkable. Still, it is something that is necessary, natural and inevitable.



REVOLUTIONARY THEORY

BY BUTCH LEE

## Table of Contents

|                                                             |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <i>Kersplebedeb</i>                                         |    |
| Introduction                                                | i  |
| <i>Comrade Parvati</i>                                      |    |
| The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal | 1  |
| <i>People's March Interview</i>                             | 19 |
| <i>Butch Lee</i>                                            |    |
| Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?                           | 39 |
| Prostitution Controversy in Nepal Revolution                | 59 |







There have been many other similar incidents reported in Nepal of Maoist guerrillas enforcing their brand of rural law and order. Schoolteachers accused of molesting students being disappeared, is just another example. Some of this is probably the confused fallout of giving guns to young people and telling them to go out and do good (the Peoples Liberation Army is very decentralized).

There is more than one political issue in this. There is no party policy in Nepal that anyone's heard of about attacking prostitutes, and doubtlessly many revolutionary women in Nepal were more than a little upset when they heard about that incident. But starting in the 1920s the Communist revolution among the peasant villages in Asia has defended their right to drive off what Mao called "tramps and vagabonds". And, yes, I know that this doesn't sound so good to liberal Western ears today (women like myself, for that matter, explicitly consider ourselves vagabonds in the world that men are destroying). But the whole meaning was radically different in that context. Desperately poor villagers ate only what they could save out of their own crops, and were often more than hungry. Dying of starvation and disease was common (just as it is in rural Nepal today). Those who did not produce themselves but wanted a share of production were parasitic. Defending your own food and space was a right to the oppressed. For the same reason that poor working class communities here in the U.S. want beggars, street alcoholics, drug sellers, as well as prostitutes, driven out. Because they are parasitic on the community, which is already hard pressed. It is middle-class intellectuals who are most comfortable with maintaining other peoples' "street culture" and want to romanticize it, because they aren't paying the very real price. And in the age of the global AIDS plague, when prostitution in Africa for example has already led to millions of deaths, we no longer think that these are "victimless crimes".

Does that mean that those Maoists who attacked the prostitutes (or the one's dragging off suspect schoolteachers) did the right thing from a Communist point of view? Nowhere even close to right. Not only were the guerrillas disoriented about protecting the male perps while beating the women victims, but they are doing the *opposite* of what Mao urged in these situations. Mao Zedong in the 1920-30s, whatever his mistakes, was trying to empower peasants who had lived beaten down and terrorized for their entire lives. Mao wanted them to make revolution, "which is not as gentle a thing as a tea party" as he often scolded well-behaved socialist intellectuals. The

## Introduction

by Kersplebedeb

In the midst of the Himalayas, covering an area roughly twice the size of Ireland with a population only slightly smaller than Canada's, until recently Nepal was a country that Westerners didn't really think about. Except as a series of exotic stereotypes. But that's all changing now.

The first anti-capitalist armed revolution in the world in twenty-five years has taken over the Nepali countryside and toppled the dictatorship of King Gyanendra and his brutal Royal Army. The "Red" guerrillas of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) have joined with the former legal opposition political parties to form a new secular republic. In a celebration and a showing of strength, the Maoists recently held a mass rally in Kathmandu, the capital, of over two hundred thousand Nepalis. Busloads of guerrilla supporters from remote villages and underground party militants from the cities jammed the streets, wearing new red Maoist t-shirts, plastering the capitol with Communist posters. Events are changing the political landscape in Nepal almost every day.

One thing hasn't changed, however. When the Maoist rebels and the interim anti-Royalist government leaders posed for the press on June 16th, after announcing their agreement to end the civil war, some forty-four faces are visible in the Reuters photograph of the successful negotiators. All of these faces are men (there are two obscured faces behind other participants who could be women). It hasn't even occurred to the "democratic" leaders of the new Nepal yet to fake it, to add women sprinkled here and there as window dressing. Now that's really backward by both capitalist and socialist standards, since faking it is what "democratic" politics is about.

But thousands of Nepali women have fought in the revolution as guerrillas. Thousands have risked death as underground organizers. Many were killed, captured and tortured, executed. The party lists of martyred women members are long. There is a woman who has spoken up for all these women, for her comrades and sisters. Comrade Parvati is a senior woman member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a member of both the party's central committee and politburo. Despite her years of being underground, Parvati has become one of the best-known revolutionary women in

Asia. Because of the strength and honesty of her political thoughts. In a party that believes in "continuous struggle" internally of evolving political views, comrade Parvati has distinguished herself. Her truth-telling pushes at the boundary between the old male revolutionary parties and politics and women's liberation.

Here are two of comrade Parvati's political assessments of her own party and its revolution. *The Question of Women's Leadership in Peoples War in Nepal* published in 2003 and her *Interview With Com. Parvati* from the Indian Maoist journal *People's March* from 2004. Both these writings have been available on the Internet (*The Question of Women's Leadership* previously appeared in the u.s. journal *Monthly Review*). Neither is available in print in North America right now, and we have been encouraged to help make comrade Parvati's voice from the Nepali revolution more available to women here. This is in no way an "authorized edition". Nor is there any necessary connection between this publication and the views of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Also included here is a critical commentary on Parvati's political thinking by the amazon communist Butch Lee.

Nepal is the second poorest country in the world, one which for most of the past forty years has been ruled by a series of autocratic despots: global capitalism has relegated the vast majority of Nepalis to lives of dire poverty. The entire country's GNP is just over 39 billion dollars (by comparison, Bill Gates' personal fortune is estimated to be somewhere around \$46 billion), 70 percent of the population live below the poverty line, 2.6 million children have to work as child laborers and one million work *without pay* as "bonded laborers". The infant mortality rate is more than 75 per 1,000, about ten times the rate of Japan or Sweden; studies by UNICEF in the 1990s were showing that malnutrition was widespread, indeed it was the norm amongst children, with 64% of children aged 6-36 months being stunted and 6% suffering from wasting.

This in a country where ten percent of the population earn 46.5 percent of the national income and own 65 percent of the cultivable land.

In 1990 a broad-based "People's Movement" (the *Jana Andolan*) claimed to put an end to decades of absolutist rule by the Nepali monarchy. Nevertheless, what followed was a period of political turmoil as representatives of feudal and ruling class power successfully resisted the various proposals - some radical, some reformist - which sought to better the lot of the Nepali

ii

## Appendix

### Prostitution Controversy in Nepal Revolution

by Butch Lee

As I was finishing this review up the news came of the International Nepal Solidarity Network report of a May 10th incident where 16 women of a migrant Badi ethnic group in a village were publicly beaten with clubs by the local CPN (M) team for engaging in prostitution. Which is just what we were talking about, fighting out within the party all the attitudes and issues of the disintegrating old society. In her interview, comrade Parvati said: "*In our country we have a particular community called the Badi community. They are basically dalit class\*; within dalits also they are the most oppressed community. They were traditionally entertainers for the feudal society. But now with feudalism eroding they have switched to prostitution. Many of them are joining the People's War.*" In this case, the women victims had refused orders to cease their means of livelihood or leave the area. So the local Communist men and women in the area conducted a public beating. According to that report the Maoists aimed their clubs and kicks especially at the Dalit women's genitals and their arms where they had their Norplant contraceptive implants inserted.

Under what circumstances should any men have the right to conduct public torture and humiliation of women? None. Should all the male customers have been beaten up by armed women? Yes. For us it is a form of institutionalized rape. Pimps and Johns in the prostitution business are no better than rapists to me. For these young revolutionaries to put all the weight on women and not on the men involved is fucked up patriarchal thinking. That is obvious. But women hearing about this should understand that there are reasons why those Maoist women were dragged along into the shit.

\* The Dalit are the "Untouchables of India", the very lowest caste-class in Hindu society who are homeless laborers, etc. and long ago also taken by their Hindu masters into Nepal where they traditionally are not considered citizens and have no recognized rights.



owned by the u.s., its national currency is the u.s. dollar, and its former president is a lifer in a u.s. prison). There is no equality in the world of men. Rather there is *difference* between oppressor and oppressed. It is the recognition of this difference that women's liberation is rooted in.

Keep in mind that every question being fought out in Nepali society is also being fought out *inside* the Maoist party and army. Not only the emerging world of women breaking the old world of men, but nationalism, neo-colonialism, self-determination for non-Hindu peoples, Hindu fascist-religious laws, rights of children and everything else. The Communist movement is not above or separate from the unsettled state of men's world. The Nepali Press has said that Parvati herself has "confirmed the recruitment of homosexuals". Yet and again, the party has been so quiet on this issue that friendly Western radical visitors have come and left admitting that they had no idea what the CPN (M) position on gay rights was\*. And the fact that this entire movement is indelibly a male institution keeps coming up over and over. Like, the party's "Chairman" and "Supreme Commander" Prachanda has modestly named their dual rural-urban strategy after himself — the "Prachanda Path". Men do have this annoying habit of naming things after themselves to mark their possessions, like wolves piss on trees to mark their territory. So men piss their names over wives, children, businesses, ideas. Not a good sign.

For all the sharp questioning of some of comrade Parvati's ideology, so many of us are joyful that the people of Nepal are overthrowing their semifeudal rulers (and thumbing their noses at the empty threats of the u.s. empire). And moved that many thousands of women there are picking up the rifle, to empower themselves if even temporarily in the armed struggle. Comrade Parvati is someone who we have to thank for sharing her hard won thoughts with other women everywhere in the world. Her words are radical and refreshing. It is a milestone every time women put out truths about our own movements.

(the end for now)

\* While queers are not mentioned once in radical journalist Li Onesto's book *Dispatches From the People's War in Nepal*, members of the First International Road Building Brigade to Rolpa District were told by CPN(M) members that the party "opposes homosexuality" - the extent and consequences of this homophobia remain unclear.

majority, who remained super-exploited both by "their own" ruling class as well as foreign imperialism (most notably that of India to the south).

This deadlock was one of the factors that led to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)'s 1996 initiation of "protracted people's war", a path that led to an escalating confrontation against the State, with the king increasingly isolated and eventually opting to suspend parliament, declare a State of Emergency and violently suppress any and all signs of dissent.

At first the initiation of armed struggle alienated some intellectuals and middle class elements, but the vacuum was quickly filled by a new generation who were inspired by the break from "politics as usual". These people had been looking for a way to *fight* against their oppression, and in joining the CPN(M) they transformed the Party, in some ways taking it over and making it their own. Ten years later the CPN(M) controlled most of the country, laying the groundwork for the massive uprising against the monarchy which rocked the country earlier this year.

This popular revolt, the *Loktantra Andolan*, has politically disarmed the State, forcing the king to reinstitute parliament and recognize the CPN(M), releasing hundreds of political prisoners. Things are changing every day now, but what is remaining constant is the fact that the Maoists are more influential than ever, and seem guaranteed to play a decisive role in Nepal's future.

As Butch Lee puts it in her commentary, "It is a milestone every time women put out truths about our own movements."

**Kersplebedeb**  
**June 2006**





*Comrade Parvati (aka Hisila Yami)  
photo from brutal Nepali monarchy's  
"Most Wanted" web page*



No, i'm not saying that the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is like the u.s. Army Airborne. What i'm saying is that worldwide women are flooding men's institutions as temporary training camps, and this is necessary and inevitable as a stage of our herstory. But while women have always been able to become skillful at men's leftism when permitted, taking on their vocabulary and viewpoint, that is not the same as learning women-centered politics. You can be skilled at one but ignorant of the other. Ignorant of yourself. Indeed, comrade Parvati observes:

*"Yes women are often themselves the victims of patriarchal ideology that is deeply ingrained within them. I have seen females who get scared when one talks of women's oppression and label one as being a feminist. They often try to suppress the fight against women's oppression in the name of fighting against class oppression."*

Parvati, of course, also implies that being a feminist is wrong since feminism is bourgeois. She doesn't explain it all, but in M-L (Male) politics feminism is only a viewpoint which mistakenly believes women's goal to be equality with men within capitalism. Rather than overthrowing the whole system of capitalist property relations and its attendant sexist, racist and colonialist oppressions. For all its armed mobilization of Nepali women in the fight for socialism, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) actually has bourgeois feminist politics. Since its vision of women's struggle is sharply limited to a far-off future equality with men within male-created institutions, i say, no, equality with men is nowhere a revolutionary program. It isn't even real.

In one of the flashes of his genius, Lenin once wrote about this debate: *"What nation is equal to what nation? What sex is equal to what sex? And what class is equal to what class?"* What Lenin was pointing out with such sarcasm is that within the capitalist system, nations, genders, and classes cannot ever be equal in reality since they were created to be oppressors and oppressed. How can a capitalist and an undocumented Mexican worker ever be equal since the capitalists cannot even exist as a class without exploiting workers? Or men and women, since the definition of a man is someone who is of the gender class that owns women and children? How can the united states and Panama ever be equal except in capitalist diplomatic fictions (founded by the u.s. empire to serve its own interests, Panama is largely

Two different things are mashed confusingly together here in Parvati's writing. One is the question of being "expert". This is the traditional Marxist-Leninist phrase for mastering knowledge needed by society, used by Parvati and her party. If a woman wants to become a construction carpenter in the u.s., she usually has to learn through a male trade union apprenticeship program. Since women were historically kept out of this field. Like an African woman physics student would naturally learn the ideas of a science that developed at a certain time as European and male, from Newton to Planck, Einstein and Heisenberg. And as a revolutionary feminist i have the insights of male revolutionaries like Marx and Mao as well as women like Thurmer-Rohr as parts of my basic thinking. We need to learn from the whole world's experience while keeping centered in who we are. Or as Mao once said in response to Chinese comrades fearful of studying Western innovations: "*Let the past serve the present, let the foreign serve China.*"

All over the world now, as a part of our latest rising, women are learning formerly forbidden knowledge in men's institutions. Kayla Williams, a liberal arts college graduate, writes in the well named *Love My Rifle More Than You* about her experiences as an enlisted Arabic translator in the u.s. army Airborne infantry in Iraq. She is more than a little skeptical about the war. This book is mostly a stream of true-life incidents of either military stupidity or crude sexist harrassment. Her favorite army male stupidity was when she translated for a unit searching an unexpectedly friendly neighborhood. Turned out that it was a Christian neighborhood, whose people expected Americans as fellow Christians to be sympathetic to them. Wrong. When they came to a monastery the monk spoke English and tried to talk to the army officer. The officer refused to "understand" him since the monk was an Arab, and demanded that the monk speak in English to Kayla who would then "translate" by repeating his English words to the army officer! Heavy sexist harrassment was the norm. Such as the time camped next to the Syrian border, when the men dealt with the numbing boredom of 110 degree days sitting in the sand waiting by inventing the "game" of seeing who could most accurately throw stones to hit Kayla's breasts (she was the only woman in the unit). Yet & again, she says she will always be proud of being "Airborne", feeling empowered by her military skills and of being tested by violence and pressure and being able to handle it. She writes that the tentativeness that used to be in her voice is gone now.

## The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal

by Conrade Parvati

### Introduction

People's War (PW) in Nepal, which was initiated in February 1996 under the leadership of the CPN (Maoist) has been developing in leaps and bounds. The fire of revolution, which initially sparked in a few districts in Western Nepal, has swept all over the country. According to the Government's own account, out of 75 districts in Nepal, PW has affected 73 districts. All these gains could not have been possible without the mobilization of the masses that are the backbone of PW in Nepal. The mobilization of women in particular is apparent in PW in Nepal. Consider their daring feats. They were the first to break the tense silence throughout Nepal caused by the first historic strike that marked the initiation of PW in Nepal on 13 February 1996. On the occasion of March 8th 1996 the All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) [ANWA(R)] dared to organize a seminar (amidst strong speculation that they all would be arrested) and to voice the need for overall revolution to solve women's oppression. It was after that bold step that other mass organizations started giving their own programmes. Dalit women in Kalikot district in western Nepal were the first to snatch rifles from reactionary armed forces and hand them over to the local Party, thus accelerating PW in that district. The first daring historical jailbreak from the heavily fortified Gorkha district jail in March 2001 by six Maoist women is one of the rarest events, perhaps even in world history. Until the clamp down of emergency rule in November 2001, of all the mass organizations the women's organization was the most active and in the forefront of the movement. The successful antiliquor drive, which rocked the whole country in October 2001, in fact forced the government to negotiate with ANWA(R). Consider another feat; even before men in the Party started renouncing their parental properties to the Party, women of Rolpa started forsaking voluntarily their personal jewelry to the local Party. After the promulgation of the Emergency, more and more women have been raped, killed, incarcerated and disappeared. Despite all this there is a growing participation of women in PW in Nepal.



There are now objective grounds for developing women's leadership in all fronts. Realizing this, CPN (Maoist) has created a separate Women's Department under the Central Committee of the Party. The function of this department is to make policies to develop women's potentialities to higher levels so that more and more women are able to reach policy making bodies in all the three fronts: Party, Army and United Front.

### **The question of women's leadership in CPN (Maoist)**

The question of women's leadership became more and more important in Nepal as revolutionary united fronts were replacing the reactionary state machinery at village and district levels. It was seen that women were joining the movement in unprecedented numbers, showing tremendous endurance, sacrifice and devotion; however they lacked expert knowledge to lead the movement. With the establishment of a central level United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC) to co-ordinate the activities of all the united fronts at various levels, this question became all the more pertinent. Also with the creation of higher military formations within the People's Liberation Army, the question of women started being raised by the women themselves. This has become more important as military formations have now reached the level of Brigade, and there are separate women's platoon and sections with the brigade. It is seen that while men are continuing to develop in the military field even when they have reached beyond 40 years of age, women are hardly seen to continue in this field beyond 25 years. While from the field, objective conditions were demanding the need of developing women's leadership qualities from the women cadres, within the Party itself there was a theoretical debate on women's role in the communist movement. It was in the Second National Conference, in the process of analysis and synthesis of achievements of PW in Nepal which led to the adoption of Prachanda Path, that women's role in institutionalization of continuous revolution and their role in preventing counterrevolution were seriously discussed. In fact the creation of separate Women's Department is the product of Prachanda Path. Their role in the three instruments of revolution — Party, Army and United Front\* — was discussed. The Party being the most decisive amongst the three instruments, the question of developing revolutionary women leaders in Communist Party was given prominence.

\* United Front organizations is the term used for governing structures established in zones liberated by the CPN(M); Li Onesto such United Front organizations include representatives of the Party, the People's Liberation Army, and representatives elected from the masses.

So who was leading who about women?

And when we think of the anti-capitalist Beguine women's communities of feudal Europe or the indigenous matriarchies of the Seneca and other peoples here or the working class women revolutionaries of the 1871 Paris Commune, we know that communism or communalism didn't begin with some important men writing theory, however good it is. Parvati says it backwards. "Where do correct ideas come from?" They come from practice, from perceiving actual life. Then from struggle to change the world and then learning from what we have done or not done. And so on in endless dialectical chain of changing the world and changing ourselves.



*...for example, Jiu Jin, a Chinese feminist revolutionary, was killed following the failed Shanghai uprising she helped organize in 1907*

villages would always travel in at least pairs. Armed for defense against male attackers with their heavy wooden pestles used for grinding grains. Which were functionally the same as long clubs. To say nothing of the Amazons who have been present in the herstories of all peoples. Nepal and its predecessor kingdoms have been ruled in their long past by queens as well as kings, while modern peasant protests have seen landlords physically attacked by angry Nepali women.

While it may look on the surface as though men have developed military science exclusively with women being only the ignorant bystanders, this science like all others has its beginnings from people's need to struggle with nature. The first struggle peoples have is always with nature. From hunting and trapping animals, hiding, using camouflage and deception, taking advantage of terrain, using tools in a wider and wider way, mapping and charting weather. Only then to managing social conflicts. So women have done it from time immemorial.

Among the 19th century Ibo women in what is called Nigeria, women going to market in other



In those very same years, in Mao's first major theoretical writing, his 1926 *Analysis of Classes in Chinese Society*, the word "women" does not appear a single time. Chinese women as a whole were completely missing from his analysis of society.

Wait, there's more. The next year, 1927, Mao Zedong was under attack from the party leadership for the idea that their revolution should be based in the rural peasantry not the cities. He wrote a now famous explanation of how rich politically the revolt among the desperate peasantry was: *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*. In this historic revolutionary essay, Mao lists "fourteen great achievements" of the rebel peasant associations. He describes these fourteen achievements one by one. In number seven he tells of peasants freeing themselves from the four traditional "systems of authority". One of these four "authorities" in the "whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology" is "women...dominated by men (the authority of the husband)." So in a section of his essay, under one of the fourteen points, and within that point in only one of four listed subpoints, Mao finally tells us about peasant women for only a few sentences (like three or four). Literally. It turns out that women are rebelling, the apparently not that important half of all China's population.

Mao wrote that the old authorities of state and clan and superstition and "the authority of the husband all begin to totter." That was it for Mao on this subject. So even here Mao Zedong marginalized women completely out of his discussion on the political struggle that they were fighting in. And at the end of this document, in his list of the goals of the Communist-led peasant struggle, not one demand is mentioned on the condition of women. Mass rape, forced marriage, foot-binding, semi-slavery within the patriarchal family, state repression of women, no right to own farms, were all injustices that revolutionary women were already fighting in 1920s China. All not in Mao's report. Mao was definitely following cautiously well behind the growing rebellion of Chinese women.



Mao was not the leader in regards to women but only a follower...

## The leadership question and women

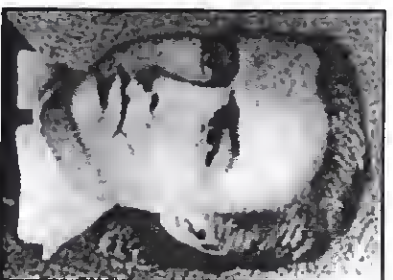
Leadership is basically actualization of political ideology, hence in the Communist Party it is the command in ideology that determines the leadership quality. This quality is developed through continuous class struggle, inner-party struggle and inner-struggle. Hence real tested leadership can only come in countries where there is class struggle, where the Party thrives on healthy inner-party struggle demanding a higher level of transformation of individuals through relentless inner-struggle. Indeed Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Chiang Ching were all products of intense class struggle and inner-party struggle that was being waged in Germany, Russia and China in their time. And being women in addition, they had to wage a more complex inner-struggle than the men of their time.

The question of leadership is also linked to objective necessity and the chance factor. In the dialectical relationship between the two, it is true that the objective condition necessitates birth of a leader but the question of who emerges as a leader is left to chance. It is here that the women's leadership question becomes slightly complicated. It is seen that revolutionary communist movements have always unleashed women's fury, but they are not able to channelize this energy into producing enduring women communist leaders. The question has been raised again and again as to why there are so few women leaders in communist parties when Marxism offers such a deep penetrating analysis and solution to women's oppression. Hence the question arises as to why the chance factor is constrained in producing women leaders in communist parties despite growing objective conditions for it? This needs deep analysis.



## Women are late arrivals in the political arena

Right from the period of the slavery system men from the privileged class developed their skill in running political state affairs. They developed their leadership quality at the cost of women of both classes and the enslaved men. This continues to this day, in some form or other. Here it is worth remembering Engels, who said that the overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex and that men took command in the house also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children. By virtue of their sole right over property men became the rulers, the women upon losing their historic mother-right became the ruled. The prevailing division of labor, according to which men undertook mental work, while women were relegated to physical work, led to cumulative experience of men in the field of analysis and synthesis of the world, while women were lost in the hidden world of household activities. Men thus monopolized the field of worldly knowledge; they have been actively involved in not only defining the world but changing it too. Consider this – women got voting rights long after it was achieved by men. Even in today's 21st century, women in Kuwait do not have the right to vote. With the imperialist countries backing religious medieval feudal rulers like the Taliban in Afghanistan (now replaced by a coalition of smaller feudal lords under Hamid Karzai) and sheiks in Gulf countries, women are restrained from entering public life. Also in Western countries, despite much noise being made by feminists, there are few women leaders in political parties. Take the case of Nepal where women are denied the right to rule right from the womb, because of the feudal monarchical system prevalent here. All these have a cumulative effect on the struggle for developing women's leadership in political parties, even in the communist parties whose history is comparatively recent and which are so antagonistic to the prevailing mainstream political parties.



*Sophia Perovskaya (left) and Vera Figner (right) were two radical women from Russia's Narodnaya Volya - "These sisters were the generation before Lenin, and didn't need his encouragement to participate in armed politics. They taught him by example about the liberation of women, not the other way around."*



were the generation before Lenin, and didn't need his encouragement to participate in armed politics. They taught him by example about the liberation of women, not the other way around. That a Lenin "stood on their shoulders", tried to build on their breakthroughs by keeping the useful and discarding what failed doesn't mean that he was wiser, just that he was one of their many political heirs. We should never forget our very many foremothers in the struggle.

Mao is often hailed by Marxists as having pointed out that "Women hold up half the sky". Which is a statement not of communist truth (women actually hold up *all* the sky) but of bourgeois ideology, preaching the deceptive goal of "equality" as the answer to the problems of the oppressed. Yet even here Mao was not the leader in regards to women but only a follower. The great and fanatical Taiping Rebellion, which was the precursor to Mao's Communist revolution, controlled much of Southern China from 1851 to 1864. It preached the Christian uplifting of women by banning foot-binding, prostitution and polygamy. Millions of poor Chinese women joined this movement. The anti-colonial Nationalist movement of the early 20th century, that called Mao himself into politics, witnessed women forming their own armed rebel groups. Such as National Women's Army, the Amazon Corps of the Dare To Die Soldiers, or the Women's Murder Squad (got to love that name). Rebel women in the cities cut their hair short and wore military dress or men's clothing as a public sign that they were refusing to submit to the old patriarchal culture. And sang their popular feminist socialist song with its pointed words, "Down With Love."



When women are permitted into rebellions started by men, and permitted into organizations that men have created, then such ideas as the ones comrade Parvati expresses are understandable ideologies or systems of false consciousness. Certainly they are not true. What deep analysis of women did Mao provide, for example? Or how exactly did Karl Marx show women "the path" for our self-emancipation? These men were great revolutionaries in men's world, but their thinking for and about women was crude or even backward. Not in any way leading. (When male revolutionary leaders did accidentally make any breakthrough in theory about women, it went without notice in men's world and was immediately forgotten).

According to this false consciousness that comrade Parvati carries, the M-L (Male) ideology and party is a neutral instrument, that can be driven in any direction depending on who is behind the steering wheel. Today men, tomorrow women. Just like General Motors is now telling us that their gigantic SUVs and pickup trucks are environmentally neutral and can be "Green" or "Yellow" or any consumer choice we will pay for. This is a bourgeois ideology, the false view that social creations can ever be neutral and abstracted from the "sensuous" human world. Without inner class character. Like believing that if the party central committee might someday in the distant future be 51% women, then the party is no longer patriarchal.

Women did not enter the house of male politics "late". We have always been there, as its most necessary foundation. It could not ever exist without us. Comrade Parvati notes that "*the most blatant manifestation seen among women due to deprivation of political and ideological education is their silence in the meetings. They seldom participate in the political discussions.*" While our sister lays this on a lack of education, we have often seen radical meetings in the U.S. (even of anarchists) where it is just the same. Where everyone in the room has college education, but women are mostly silent and 90% of the discussion or more is taken by men. Because that is our role. Because men's framework is naturally not ours.

Parvati forgets to say this, but throughout the world women's struggles and women's political breakthroughs long predate the Marx and Maos. Where do you think they learned about women from? Books? The revolutionary terrorist women of Russia's *Narodnaya Volya* were poets and intellectuals. Who renounced motherhood and took part in conspiracies to destroy serfdom by assassinating Czarist officials and the Czar himself. These sisters

## Prevailing mode of production is not favorable

The base and superstructure of the present society is based on exploitation in general and in particular on exploitation of women's reproductive and domestic labor. In property relations women are looked upon as maintainers of men's property and producers of sons to pass on the property within a male lineage. The prevailing superstructure, such as the social, cultural, educational, and political system, are all geared to support this exploitation. Take the example of the marriage institution. It is an alliance of convenience for men to perpetuate their hegemonism in property relations. For women the same alliance in fact marginalizes them to domestic slavery. Sadly this holds true amongst the communists too, although to a lesser degree.

Nepal with strong left movements has periodically produced many women activists, but they seem to vanish as soon as they are recognized. One of the most apparent reasons is the institution of marriage, which has robbed us of promising women leaders. People's War seems to be changing that pattern, however, even within PW the question of continuity of women's leadership keeps coming up, especially when they get married and decide to have children. This is because in countries like Nepal, where the feudal patriarchal system is yet more oppressive than the capitalist patriarchal system in advanced countries, the married life of women communists can be more complex. Although the element of the notion of private property is slowly disappearing in Nepal with the waning of PW, however the cultural root of feudalism eventually creeps in in many forms, such as the conventional division of labor in the name of necessity. Added to this is the unilateral burden a woman has to carry when she becomes a mother. With the birth of every child she sinks deeper into domestic slavery. In fact many women who have been active in People's War in Nepal are found to complain that having babies is like being under disciplinary action, because they are cut off from the Party activities for a long period. In this way many bright aspiring communist women are at risk of being lost in oblivion, even after getting married to the comrades of their choice. This is specially so in white dominated areas\* where women seldom get support system from the mass as well as from the Party to sustain themselves in their reproductive years. However, it is heartening to see that this problem is being solved in the base

\* Areas still dominated by the local traditional elite.



areas of Rolpa and Rukum, where the mass support and the consolidation of the Party has made it possible for the Party and masses to support such maternal burdens of women leaders. Another aspect of Nepalese feudal society is that there is a strong pressure on women to bear children, especially sons. With the launching of PW this aspect has been negated to some level, however, there is still pressure to have at least one child.

There is also the tendency to create pressure on women cadres to get married covertly or overtly as unmarried women draw lots of suspicion from men as well as women for their unmarried status. This results in marriages against their wishes or before they are ready to get married. Also there is a tendency to take sexual offenses more seriously than political offenses.

### **Women's struggle is more complex than men's**

For communist women, it is not enough for them to participate in class struggle, inner-party struggle, and inner-struggle. Often they may remain in the minority even if they belong to the majority line within the party. And because they are the product of this patriarchal structure, hence their inner-struggle consists in not only struggle against themselves as individuals but also struggle against the effect of patriarchal values on them, such as fatalistic tendency, inferiority complex, guilt syndrome, victim syndrome, etc. They have to face an even more complex struggle if they happen to be single, divorced or married more than once. This is well documented in Alexandra Kollantai's collection of articles. In fact she represents the best example of revolt against such marriages. She left her first husband and child in order to concentrate more on revolutionary work, then later she left her second (communist) husband on the ground of his stereotyped expectation of the marriage alliance. And because of her rebellion against conventional marriages she not only faced difficulties with the bourgeois society but also from conservative communists as well. As a result Alexandra Kollontai is more known for the "glass of water theory" (the theory that sex should be as easy and uncomplicated as drinking glass of water) among the conservative



*Alexandra Kollontai  
communist woman pioneer*

Oddly enough (here I am being sarcastic) the Chinese Red Army managed to make the world's largest revolution in 1927-1949 without many "women communist companions" among them. During the long guerrilla years in the countryside, very, very few Red male soldiers (and they were almost all male, most Red women staying to make the mass peasant revolution in the villages) had women to "comfort" them. When someone needed to be fired up to concentrate on their job better, it had nothing to do with gender roles. They were assigned a recovering wounded soldier or a "little Red devil", one of the many orphans taken up by the Red Army. To make tea and keep track of papers and carry bags. And the Chinese male guerrilla revolutionaries seemed to find the "comfort" of other men to be quite adequate (although it is true that Mao had wives during that time).

Needless to say, comrade Parvati has no discussion of how important it is for their movement to equally produce young male companions and comforters for women leaders. This is a funny blank. Behind the surface of romance or caring or equality is something quite different. To say nothing of the fact that women don't need men for "comfort" because we have us, ourselves. What is so useful is that Parvati says out loud the rotting patriarchal assumptions barely hidden behind the curtain.



*These revolutionaries seemed to  
find the "comfort" of other men to  
be quite adequate*

All this brings us to the edge of the biggest contradiction and question mark implicit in comrade Parvati's writings. It is summed up in Mao's famous question, "Where do correct ideas come from?" Over and over, comrade Parvati says that the existing Marxist-Leninist (Male) party is the only doorway women can go through to liberate ourselves. Because, in her words, "women are late arrivals in the political arena", men like Marx and Mao have already discovered the basic revolutionary theory and politics that women have to learn from. "Let us not forget that it was also revolutionary men like Karl Marx, Engels, August Bebel, Lenin, Mao etc. who provided deep analysis of women's oppression and have shown the path of women's emancipation."

involve one or both partners as "martyrs" dying in battle. (There is a lot of discussion of death in Parvati's writings because the number of Nepali women being killed in combat has been very high. The great breakthroughs against the enslavement of women have not been without cost, since patriarchal capitalism concedes nothing without struggle).

And then there is the real "Gritting Your Teeth Award" paragraph near the end of her article, where Parvati writes how important it is for the movement to produce "*women communist companions*" providing "*comfort and companionship*" for male Communists. This wonderful phrase "*women communist companions*" is one I've never heard before out loud. Although Marxism-Leninism (Male) subculture has always given this an unacknowledged priority in practice.

Again, what comrade Parvati is contributing here is her insistence on an honest discussion on everything to do with the condition of women, especially within the revolution. Is she being a small part tongue in cheek here? I don't know, but it doesn't matter. Parvati continues by reminding everyone of the need for women to "*sustain and preserve revolutionary communist men leaders.*" Which seems to be a higher category of providing "*comfort and companionship*" to men. This whole discussion is hilarious in a totally awful way. (That certainly has been the practice of male lefts. Lenin, who was a brilliant revolutionary for men, was supported financially by his mother his adult life until they seized state power, and at home was personally taken care of by his wife, Krupskaya. Nice. How are you supposed to carry out a working class social revolution if you haven't lived a working class communal life yourself?). Women are still being used as accessories to energize even revolutionary men's lives. To preserve a private space that is the ownership of human beings. But then the next day after the guerrillas seize state power, everyone is supposed to set up a new non-authoritarian culture that they've never lived themselves? This isn't like lego where you just push the pieces into place.



Nadezhda Krupskaya &  
husband Lenin

communists than her contributions to the communist movement and the proletarian women's movement. Take another example, that of Chiang Ching. She had to face slander from the bourgeois press and personalities because of her past marriages, and even within the Party she was not received kindly. Chiang Ching had to agree to political isolation for many years as a condition for her to marry Mao. This decision was taken when the rightist Liu Shao Chi was in the Party headquarters.



Chiang Ching

## Manifestation of patriarchal values in communist party

Since the feminist movement is the product of the bourgeois revolution, quite often communist parties tend to become hyper-sensitive to women's issues. As a result they fall prey to patriarchal values even while agreeing in theory to women's liberation. This is manifested in many ways. For example instead of taking women as reliable long-term equal partners in the communist movement it takes women's role as supportive. As a result the Party is often found overemphasizing the class struggle at the cost of gender exploitation, forgetting the dialectical relationship between the two. There have been cases of delaying the formation of separate women's organization or even temporarily dismissing existing women's organization within communist parties. In parties where separate women's organization exists, there are cases where the women's mass front is not given the required degree of freedom so as to make their own plans and programmes, thus robbing them of initiative and creative power. This ultimately breeds alienation and tailism in the Party. This can also take place by not coordinating the women's programme with the party programme and as a result the party programme gets priority over the women's programme. **Con-the Party is often found overemphasizing the class struggle at the cost of gender exploitation, forgetting the dialectical relationship between the two** Con-servatism in the party can also be seen through relegating women cadres to only women related work, thereby robbing them of the chance to develop in party policy matters and other fields.



In the practical front, this leads to spontaneity whereby women's issues are addressed but not implemented because one leaves it to circumstances, leading to gradualism. Often it is seen that the party does not actively intervene in the existing traditional division of labor between men and women whereby men take to mental work while women are left to do physical labor. This is also manifested in taking men and women as absolute equals by not being sensitive to women's special condition and their special needs. This becomes all the more apparent when women are menstruating or are in the reproductive period.

### Lack of subjective effort on the part of women cadres

Women have to wage a longer struggle because of their double oppression. However due to lack of subjective efforts they lose half way. For example, where they have successfully rebelled against feudal values, they have not been able to sustain themselves in class struggle. And where they have been able to wage class struggle, they have not been able to sustain in inner-party struggle. And by not participating or participating poorly in inner-party struggle they lose sharpness on ideology, thus robbing them of their chance to determine the course of the communist movement, which has so much relevance to their own liberation. Their lack of subjective effort is manifest in many ways. In the field of ideology, they fall prey to pragmatism, economism, sectarianism because they are not serious enough to study theoretical knowledge and be involved in inner-party struggle to overcome their objective conditions, which in turn breeds these tendencies because of their past objective conditions.



erthod as the important role for women: "The dogmatic-revisionist tendency is seen by romanticizing the bearing of children as yet another front where women can prove their mettle in class struggle. But in practice, all this revolutionary romanticism looses its heat when the practical problems of bearing and bringing up children start hindering the combat life of the cadres amidst fierce class struggle. This eventually results in women to take back seat in the revolutionary movement."

Along this line, it is telling that comrade Parvati repeatedly holds up "fine women communist leaders like Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Inessa Armand, Krupskaya, etc." To those not familiar with Marxist-Leninist (Male) culture, this lineup is highly unlikely. Two of these, Kollontai and Armand, are rarely held up as models or praised as leaders. Both Russian Old Bolsheviks, both are also known as leading advocates of "free love" and opponents of marriage. In addition, Kollontai was a leader of the Workers Opposition in the early 1920s. Which opposed the party leadership of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, etc. as building a new state bureaucracy over the working class. Armand led in the Communist relief efforts during the famine of their civil war and died doing that. She put her beliefs about "free love" into practice by becoming Lenin's lover. Scandalizing the Bolshevik leadership. To knowingly praise them as leaders, as Parvati does, is to make a point that pushes at the boundaries of women's role within men's revolutions.

The obvious conclusion is that the liberation of women demands an end to marriage in any form that we've known, just as a start. Of course, Parvati does not say this. It would fly in the face of her party's line and perhaps her own beliefs. Parvati does speak to the press about reading books together and otherwise enjoying her relationship to Bhattarai. So at a later point in her article she adds a balancing discussion of "good" Communist marriages. Her examples of correct marriages almost all



Inessa Armand:  
breaking the boys' rules



Com. Parvati &  
husband Bhattarai



There is a connection between guerrilla war and the seismic shift inside the Nepalese movement that led to the entrance of women onto the main political stage. While most of Nepal is a chain of semi-feudal rural societies, the major urban areas have long had a sizable political left of the pro-Moscow or pro-Indian social-democracy type. In this subculture, women were present in name but not in practice. That was visible on ABC or CBS television news this past Spring, as the nightly coverage of Kathmandu's pro-democracy struggle showed us... endless crowds of men filling the streets, with only an occasional woman here or there. As Parvati says of her own left subculture:

*"So there was a big gap between theory and practice, so as a result what happened was that the women in their young age were very active, but once they became married they eventually became either the wives of leaders or vanished into oblivion. Thus marriage became a patriarchal left institution for producing good efficient wives for the male communist leaders at the cost of losing women cadres in the communist movement. But because the left movement was active, you would get fresh group of women coming and again vanishing. This cycle of vicious circle got asundered with the initiative of People's War in the year 1996. It unleashed the fury of women so far locked up in legal and trivial struggle."*

Parvati says point-blank: *"The most radical rupture the Peoples War was able to bring in women's lives was that it broke women away from the family shackle."*

**It's the family not the landlord or the government or the factory boss that is the first and most important target of struggle. Since the family is the slave plantation, the factory, the prison as far as women are concerned. That it is also the site of possible affection and support makes it all the more insidious. She is not fooling around with domestic reform here. Over and over this Nepali woman leader says that women must break with having children and raising children in order to become communist fighters and leaders. (Which was exactly the general kind of view that Elizabeth Cady Stanton urged on u.s. feminist activists a century ago).**

This raises a lot of long-range questions about how society should be structured. Parvati, in her best Marxist-Leninist form, roasts those socialists who — like Mussolini, Hitler, Bush and other euro-fascists — promote moth-

In the practical field they often fall into tailism whereby they follow the directives of the party blindly without questioning, just as traditional women have been following their fathers when unmarried, and their husbands when married, and their sons when widowed. They thus become the victims of circumstance. This manifests in unplanned motherhood, which affects them most if they are in the military field. It manifests in following the husband's political line blindly instead of developing one's own political line, thereby affecting their independent political life. By not being assertive of their rights they fall into the trap of traditional division of labor. As a result they covertly become the vehicle of traditional conservative ideas leading to counter-revolution. In many cases they take marriage and motherhood as a break in their political/military career as if it is temporary work. Similarly they become willing partners to their husband's field of work thereby losing hold of their own previous work. Hence frequent change of place and work affects them more than men. The effect of all these tendencies leads to developing an inferiority complex among women which is counter-productive to the revolution.

### Men's willingness to give up their special privileges

While women cadres have the problem of asserting themselves, men cadres have the problem of relinquishing the privileged position bestowed on them by the patriarchal structure. This is manifested in many ways. This is mainly seen in the form of formal acceptance of women's leadership, while in essence not accepting their leadership. Thus there are delays made in establishing women's leadership in the Party, PLA and United Front. This also results in their being impatient with women's mistakes and general lack of skill in fields from which women have been excluded. Often they relegate women's issues to women as if it does not concern them. This is manifested in not reading literature on women's issues, and not taking part in implementing programmes given by the women's mass front. Sometimes this covertly is seen in the form of being overprotective about safety of women cadres when it is not warranted and by undertaking women's mental work on their behalf. This is also seen in their sticking to old traditional division of labor, without relinquishing their monopoly on mental work and relegating women to everyday drudgery work. Not wanting to give up their privileged position they tend to discourage promising wives from taking up independent work, which would take them far off from their husbands.



Clara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg  
and unknown woman

## Political line and the question of women's leadership

It is the correct ideology and policy of the communist party that will determine the quality of women communist leaders produced and the path of women's liberation. It was the correct political line of the Bolshevik Party headed by Com. Lenin that produced fine women communist leaders like Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Inessa Armand, Krupskaya, etc. It was the correct political line because of which communist women leaders like Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg were able to evolve the concept of celebrating 8th March as International Working Women's Day every year globally, the decision being taken by the first international socialist women's conference in Stockholm in the year 1910. And it is being followed by not only communists but also the bourgeoisie (in their own way) even till this day.

It was the correct political line of Com. Rosa Luxemburg of exposing and struggling against Bernstein in her book *Reform or Revolution* and later her struggle against Kautsky that brought her to the notice of revolutionary communists of the world. She dared to warn Lenin that bureaucracy may breed in the structure of the Party if the question of centralism and democracy are not understood in their dialectical relationship and under the specific condition of the individual country where it is applied. With the occurrence of counter-revolution in previous socialist states and with the tendencies of bureaucracy which seem to sap revolutionary parties engaged in PW time and again, her warning seems to have relevance even today.

and women's farming co-ops are combined there. Across Nepal the Maoist women's association has conducted anti-alcoholism drives in the villages. As their armed militias have ended the sex trafficking in girl-children in zones that they control.

The point is that even activities as simple as these all assume women's political violence as their foundation. During his own guerrilla revolution, Mao Zedong said that among the masses political organizing and armed struggle were not opposite activities but interdependent. That without the gun to protect themselves those trying political organizing in the peasant countryside would simply be wiped out by the police and the local gangs that work for the capitalists. If it is true for women in Black housing projects in Chicago, if it is true for women who have to run and hide in battered women's shelters in New York, then you know it is true in rural Nepal where capitalist men have always done whatever they wished to the oppressed.



But even within this People's War, even in the guerrilla Communist Party (Maoist), women trying to free themselves are being undermined again and again. Parvati is not telling us this lightly. The main problem to her is marriage and the patriarchal culture within the party. M-L (Male) doctrine has always stressed how oppressive bourgeois marriage is versus how wonderfully liberating revolutionary marriage is. Parvati seems to barely pay lip service to this standard (truth in lending: myself, I think that "revolutionary marriage" is an oxymoron like "anti-racist nazi"). Particular after particular, she hurls scorn at marriage as it is being practiced by her movement. She defines marriage as "an alliance of convenience for men to perpetuate their hegemony in property relations. For women the same alliance in fact marginalizes them to domestic slavery. Sadly this holds true among the communists too, although to a lesser degree." Parvati points out that often women are forced to drop out of being fighters or even activists after "communist marriage" and child-raising responsibilities. Women are seldom seen in the Communist military ranks after age 25. Unlike men.

But even within this People's War, even in the guerrilla Communist Party (Maoist), women trying to free themselves are being undermined again and again. Parvati is not telling us this lightly. The main problem to her is marriage and the patriarchal culture within the party. M-L (Male) doctrine has always stressed how oppressive bourgeois marriage is versus how wonderfully liberating revolutionary marriage is. Parvati seems to barely pay lip service to this standard (truth in lending: myself, I think that "revolutionary marriage" is an oxymoron like "anti-racist nazi"). Particular after particular, she hurls scorn at marriage as it is being practiced by her movement. She defines marriage as "an alliance of convenience for men to perpetuate their hegemony in property relations. For women the same alliance in fact marginalizes them to domestic slavery. Sadly this holds true among the communists too, although to a lesser degree." Parvati points out that often women are forced to drop out of being fighters or even activists after "communist marriage" and child-raising responsibilities. Women are seldom seen in the Communist military ranks after age 25. Unlike men.



man leadership" and "Stalinism". The public split in the party resulted in a face-saving compromise, and both Parvati and Bhattarai were reinstated in July 2005.

Her politics personally embody, then, the unity and contradiction between men's revolutions and our own liberation. Don't be misled by the language in her writing. Which is not only in old Marxist-Leninist style and jargonistic, but is in what we could call "Asian-British english". For example, in one section about village fairs, Parvati writes about women "running the mess", which is about a commissary or vendor stalls. The word "band" is used a number of times, which is not a rock group but "bandh" or a general strike. The style and vocabulary are sometimes different but the thinking isn't.

In Parvati's herstoric, *The Question of Women's Leadership in People's War in Nepal*, she goes right for the jugular. Starting by locating the question. It isn't about whether women participate to one degree or another in armed revolution. It's about women communally taking leadership. Ensuring that revolution, after all of women's sacrifices and invaluable contributions, really works for the oppressed and not for some new capitalist state bureaucracy. Especially for women. "...revolutionary communist movements have always unleashed women's fury; but they are not able to channelize this energy into producing enduring women communist leaders. The question has been raised again and again as to why there are so few women leaders in communist parties..." It's always nice when a sister can say that the king has no clothes & the queen is only half dressed, too.

Parvati is proud that Nepali women are being empowered by joining the armed struggle. Gaining self-confidence, knowledge, leadership, and the Amazon abilities of physical self-defense. These aren't small things to a gender of semi-slaves. No matter how much the slick capitalist world wants to condemn revolutionary armed women, everyone who wants to can see the night-and-day difference between these Nepali Communist women fighters and women in Darfur, who are disarmed politically and militarily. Compare and contrast. Can we admit to ourselves what that difference means?

An entire social revolution has been going on with women in the countryside. Uneven, bitterly contested even within the party, but real. There are now model "women's villages" where women's rights and activities are for the first time the law. New projects like child daycare centers, literacy classes,

Similarly it was the correct political line carried by Com. Mao which heralded Cultural Revolution that unleashed women's fury. It was a woman who put up the first poster denouncing Liu Shao Chi heralding the revolt against rightist headquarters. It was the Cultural Revolution that unleashed Com. Chiang Ching's suppressed leadership quality making her one of the resolute fighters against the capitalist roaders until her death (or murder?). One must also remember that in the period of occupation of headquarters by the rightist Liu Shao Chi, he was the one who ordered women to go back home in order to solve the unemployment problem that was looming large. It was the rightist policy, Perestroika, and the capitalist policy of Deng which slowly introduced commercialization of women thus bringing back prostitution, gambling, beauty contests etc. in Russia and China.

Having said all this, let us not forget that just as women themselves are divided into different classes, so are the communist women divided along rightist, centrist, and revolutionary lines. Due to anti-working women's liberation policy taken by the rightist and centrist line, those women who belong to these lines are eventually marginalized in their own parties and remain exposed outside the party because of their anti-women's stand. Whereas those women who stood by the revolutionary line even while failing to make revolution in their own country remain popular. Take the case of Rosa Luxemburg, who is the most popular woman communist leader so far. She was killed before





she could realize her dream; this all the more enhanced respect for her as a devoted woman communist leader in the communist world. Similarly it was the tough stand taken by Chiang Ching who defended Mao's revolutionary line even in her captivity until her death in revisionist China that made her the defiant heroine.

It is interesting to observe that revolutionary communist women have always been on the offensive when they are fighting against the revisionists. The reason may be because they are painfully aware that revisionism breeds bureaucratization, which in turn strengthens patriarchal values, ultimately negating women in politics.

It should be noted that in third world country like Nepal, where class differentiation is not sharp enough, inner-party struggle may often appear in the form of gender, ethnic, regional struggle. Hence the gender issue becomes quite an important component of the class issue. In such a case dismissing the gender issue as an alien force will ultimately affect class struggle.

### **Private property and the question of women's leadership**

It is time and again seen that women masses do come in a tide to participate in revolutionary movements producing some potential women leaders. But this tide along with the prospective women leaders seems to recede once the revolution is completed or is defeated. The chief reason behind this phenomenon is the existence of the concept of private property. As long as private property remains women will always have to go back to tend individual household activities, maintaining private property for men, no matter how many social revolutions take place. Hence the concept of continuous revolution until one reaches communism has strategic relevance for women, because it is only then that private property gets abolished, unleashing the creativity of women. That is why it is important to make conscious efforts by revolutionary parties of the world to create a conducive environment for developing revolutionary women communist leaders so that they can play a role as catalyst agents in arriving at communism. Hence the question of developing women communist leaders cannot be left to chance, they need to be consciously nurtured, cultivated and safeguarded.

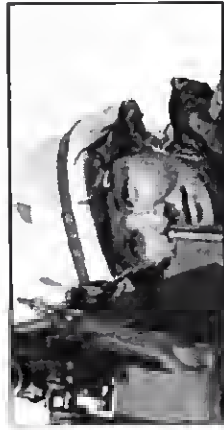
What is so unusual in Nepal is not so much the women guerrillas, but the outspoken mix of ideas that comrade Parvati represents. She is pushing towards the borders of women-centered politics from within the old framework of men's national liberation movements and parties. Parvati is known internationally within the left for her view that the continued oppression of women within new Marxist-Leninist societies has been the virus from which the capitalist infection regrew to capture first the Communist party and then the entire society in both Russia and China. Thus, patriarchy is not a side question to class but the *central* class question in modern revolutionary politics. Makes sense to me.

Men's Marxist-Leninist parties are modernist by nature, so a certain style of lip-service towards women's liberation goes along with this. Eventual far-off equality between genders is their official male goal. Usually along with a denunciation of feminism as a "bourgeois democratic" politics. Comrade Parvati seems to march ideologically along with all this, but she also carries an angry eye on women's realities that would set the dulltest textbook afire.

Parvati is the name of a Hindu goddess of love and marriage, especially ironic for the party name of a woman with her anti-patriarchal views. Her birth name is Hisila Yami. She was educated as an architect in India at New Delhi's elite School of Planning and Architecture. Yami was a lecturer in city planning at Nepal's Pulchowk Campus of Engineering. She is married to Baburam Bhattarai, who is generally considered the CPN (M)'s second ranking leader and its major theoretician. Three years after the start of the guerrilla insurgency, Yami went underground. So her life has changed a lot since her youth in a "rich middle-class background." Now she only sees her daughter, who is 20, about once a year under careful circumstances. Since the guerrilla war began Parvati has worked as a leader of the party Women's Department and in the party's International Department, building relationships with other revolutionaries and supporters in other countries. As well as serving as one of the few women in the CPN(M) politburo and central committee. Writings on women's issues under Hisila Yami's name, both alone and coauthored with Bhattarai, have appeared in Nepal and India for some years. Comrade Parvati also works with the party annual journal, *the Worker*.

She was suspended in March 2005 from the party along with Bhattarai because their faction went public with its opposition to the politburo's "one-

Young teenage girls from Nepal are a major source of new bodies for the brothels of India, either sold by their male relatives or kidnapped in the extensive cross-border sex trafficking that all the region's patriarchal capitalist governments support. There are believed to be 200,000 or more Nepali women enslaved in Indian brothels. This is just what is general. Not even taking into account all the special oppression faced by the "untouchable" Dalit caste women and the women of the many non-Hindu ethnic peoples who are a third or more of Nepal. Women are joining the revolution not for men's reasons but for slave revolt reasons, often becoming guerrillas to counter landlord violence or to escape marriage (carrying a rifle with a women's unit does a lot for that man problem).



It is for similar reasons that Amazons are being created worldwide. One-third of all unit commanders in the Sandinista army in Nicaragua in the 1970s were women. Even capitalist armies or warlord armies, such as the U.S. army or the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, are discovering their pragmatic need for arming women. Even the Royal Nepal Army began recruiting women soldiers in 2004. As comrade Parvati said in a commentary for the *Nepal Times* on that step by the enemy, there is a "global practice of having women in the army."



middle of page: woman in US Army  
bottom: commander Black Diamond (center) and members of the Women's Artillery Corps which fought in Liberia from 1999 to 2003

## Some experiences of women's leadership in Nepal

Realizing the importance of revolutionary women and their role in the communist movement, CPN(Maoist) has come forward with some encouraging results. Today there are several women in the Central Committee of the Party. There are dozens of women at the regional level and hundreds in the district levels, and several thousands in the area and cell levels in the Party. In the People's Liberation Army there are many women commanders, vice commanders in different sections within the brigade, platoons, squads and militia. There are separate women's sections in the brigade: women platoons, women squad teams, women militia teams functioning in the field. In the United Revolutionary People's Council, which is an embryonic central people's government organizing committee, there are four women out of 37 members. Women's participation in all levels of People's Councils has been made mandatory.



According to some reports  
almost half of all combatants in the People's Liberation Army are women



Just to give some idea about their participation in different fields, let us take the Western region of Nepal. This region alone has 1500 women's units. The total number of women membership in the women's mass organization is six hundred thousand. In the military field there are ten women section commanders in the main force, two women platoon commanders in the secondary force and several militia commanders in the basic force. The team commander of the health section of the battalion force is a woman. The women there have started a campaign called "One village, one unit, one house, one friend." This has helped in organizing and politicizing village after village. Similarly in the field of production, there is a campaign called "Where there is contact, there is organization; where there is organization, there is production." Hence women are also involved in production activities. They are actively involved in conducting people's courts where informers, drunkards, gamblers, womanizers, and cheaters are punished. In such trials usually local women militias are actively involved together with the villagers. Hence one can say the objective basis for producing women leaders in various fields are ripening in western region.

Today more and more women are encouraged to rebel against their oppressive marriages, and politically incorrect marriages. Take the case of Com. Shilpa, who was first a commander in a guerrilla squad and later a sub-regional committee member of the Party and vice-chairman of a district level people's committee. She had a heroic death while laying an ambush against the reactionary armed forces in May 2002. She dared to denounce and divorce her husband who had reneged against the revolution after being captured. There is an increasing trend of widow remarriages\*. The definition of the family of martyrs has now been extended to those wives of martyred comrades who have remarried without forsaking the revolutionary cause. This has indirectly helped widows of martyred men to remarry without feeling guilt. Take the example of Com. Shilu\*\*, the commander of the historic women jail breakers in Gorkha in March, 2001. She has remarried

\* Condemned by orthodox Hindu tradition.

\*\* Six women guerrillas made a daring escape in Nepal on March 31, 2001. The women had been held in the Gorkha (in the central region) jail since 1999. Uma Bhujel (aka Comrade Shilu), Kamala Naharki, Engela B.K., Sanju Aryal, Meena Marhatta and Rita B.K, the six prisoners, won their freedom by digging a tunnel out of the enemy's dungeon. The tunnel, nearly 15 metres long, passed under two heavily fortified walls and was dug out using just an iron rod and a few kitchen appliances.

In critical ways Nepal's women are the heart of the revolution, because they are the heart of society. As she points out, because many men in the countryside must emigrate away in search of work, households headed by women and virtual villages of women are normal in Nepal. "The women in Nepal are in fact like *de facto* women-headed households. They are married but literally living on their alone most of the years taking care of children and parents. So you can virtually say that women are running the peasant economy in Nepal." Rural women spend their entire lives at hard labor. Raising crops and raising children and taking care of the elderly and doing most of the work to sustain villages. With nothing for themselves except bare survival. Of Nepali women in the labor force, only 7% receive wages (and even here, in agriculture, women's wages average only a third of men's wages). Another 29% are self-employed, usually as marginal vendors and home crafts women. But 64% of Nepali women do unwaged labor for family farm or small business.

Oppressed by all the social mechanisms of being a semi-slave proletariat of their own, Nepali women are often forced into marriage. Marriage between men and women is always a cover for legalized rape and ownership of women's bodies and reproduction as men's property. This doesn't mean sex between men and women, but marriage as a legal institution. In Nepal violence of all kinds against women is endemic. Polygamy and child sexual slavery is as legal as abortion has always been illegal. Although new laws passed a few years ago in theory legalized abortion, women are still being prosecuted for it. Women are still serving long sentences for this in Nepal's prisons. Divorce or remarriage for women is often not permitted according to the dominant Hindu religion. Property is held by men and inherited by men.





Ever since the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) began Peoples War on February 13, 1996, women have been joining the armed struggle both as soldiers and as activists. As of 2003, the CPN(M) said that their revolutionary women's association had 600,000 active members in 1,500 local units just in Nepal's Western region alone. Comrade Parvati wrote then: "In the Peoples Liberation Army there are many women commanders, vice commanders in different sections within the brigade, platoons, squads and militia. There are separate women's sections in brigade: women platoons, women squad teams, women's militia teams functioning in the field."



At a 2003 peace meeting of women from different political viewpoints, including the royal government, comrade Parvati said that nearly 33 percent of the Maoist army were female, and that two had risen up the ranks to become brigade commanders. "In some cases men have abandoned weapons and run from encounters, but women have never done so. We won all the battles that involved a large number of women guerillas," she said.

While that is a shocking breakthrough in terms of an old feudal culture, and an acceptable record by the standards of the male-owned left, that's all it is. As strongly as our Nepali sisters are rising, it is still within the boundaries of the old male world. Where women contribute their intelligence and energy to a male party commanded by men. And this is the real contradiction that Parvati seems to be wrestling with. Let's break it down.

another comrade after losing her husband Bhim Sen Pokharel who got martyred while giving protection to Com. Basu, the first martyred politburo member of CPN(Maoist). There have been cases of husbands and wives being given challenging works. It is worth mentioning that Com. Phul Maya BK, who was a section commander of a battalion in the historic Dang Barrack attack on November 23, 2001, was martyred along with her husband Com. Bijok in the same battle. Also it is worth mentioning that the political commissar for the Satbaria barrack attack in Dang in April 2002 was a woman. In the course of promulgation of the Emergency and military mobilization many husbands, wives and sons and daughters have been martyred, this also indicates the level of politicalization of the family in Nepal.

## Conclusion

From the above it can be concluded that the importance of revolutionary women's leadership in the communist party has strategic importance as they are a reliable, long term and mass based force which will help push the communist movement from New Democratic Revolution to socialism, and from socialism to stateless and propertyless communism where complete women's emancipation is guaranteed. Taking on the relationship between



road-building in liberated zone

communism and emancipation of women, Inessa Armand has rightly said that if the emancipation of women is unthinkable without communism, then communism is unthinkable without the full emancipation of women. The concepts of right to rebel, cultural revolution, continuous revolution, overall revolution, mass based politics etc., all have strong appeal and application for women because of their double oppressed status. Their double oppression and the continued false promise of equality given to them by the ruling class (including the revisionist left parties) keeps them

alert and on their toes to check any counter-revolution or revisionism, because they have seen the gains of women's rights slowly eroding with every capitalist stand taken by the party in both Russia and China.

The Communists should be politically aware that if patriarchal values are not checked periodically through rectification campaigns then it may slowly breed bureaucracy in the party. The result of bureaucracy in the party is that it gets cut off from the masses. Once the party becomes an end in itself, serving the interest of its own existence, it will eventually strengthen revisionism. This will result in the party becoming the vanguard of the exploiting class instead of the exploited class, thus losing both class and gender perspective.

For the communist movement to flourish it is not enough to produce individual outstanding women communist leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg or Clara Zetkin, but also equally important to produce women communist companions like Krupskaya and Chiang Ching, who were leaders in their own field, who stood by their husbands who were leaders of the communist movement. They were not only providing their husbands with comfort and companionship but were also actively engaged in two-line struggle in the party. We also need women like Jenny Marx who stood by her husband like a rock in the hours of political and personal turmoil, and helped him in whatever capacity she had. For in order to preserve the gains of revolution and its continuous advancement, we need to not only produce revolutionary women leaders but also equally it is important to sustain and preserve revolutionary communist men leaders. Let us not forget that it was also revolutionary men like Karl Marx, Engels, August Bebel, Lenin, Mao etc. who provided deep analysis of women's oppression and have shown the path of women's emancipation.

Also it is important to note that just as communist women know that for every gain in the proletarian people's power there is a relative gain in women's power, similarly communist men should know that the revolution and the gains of revolution can only be preserved and furthered when more and more women join and lead the revolution. Similarly just as the proletarian movement needs the input of all those who have rebelled against their class outlook, similarly the proletarian women's movement needs the input of all those who have not only rebelled against their class outlook but also against their stereotyped sexist outlook. Hence the alliance between revolutionary

*"Maoism may seem like an anachronism if you're sitting in a Starbucks accessing your 401(k) account online over here, but in the post-modern world there are many more people living in desperately poor, feudalistic rural societies ruled by landlord capitalist classes who keep their traditional positions with armies of gunthugs."*

*"In that situation, Maoism is like an old but reliable weapon. Like a do-it-yourself kit crafted for precisely that situation. That has all the concepts and strategies and tactics even down to the details of organization and the slogans, that a handful of revs can use to build a mass revolutionary power and overthrow the old order. If you were a debt slave child condemned to labor until early death in the plantations of Western Nepal, Mao is like a flash of the freshest thing you ever heard of. 'Political power comes from the barrel of a gun.'"*

*"That's why there is a 'Red belt' of Maoist guerrilla insurgencies and liberated zones involving millions of people stretching thousands of miles across India and Nepal. We've all learned that political weapons like Maoism can unfortunately be used against the oppressed as well as for the oppressed, but the point is to always remember how effective these weapons can be. That's the reality in this post-modern 21st century."*



*the village of Tilla Bazar in Rolpa district liberated by the CPN(M)*



The question i am centered on is the contradiction of women's liberation within the revolutions of men. Revolutions that have led women not to freedom but back to domesticity.

i am not an expert about Nepal and their Communist movement, and i certainly do not have advice for Nepali women. But this Parvati has particular revolutionary ideas interesting to women like me who believe in armed struggle as the means of ending mass rape and killings. Suits and their pets have wishfully consigned armed revolutionary women to the dumpster of the departed 20th century. Still, we are growing, advancing. Not willing to just leave it on that self-congratulatory note, we are also at the same time shrinking and retreating. Check out Darfur and child porn or tv shows about serial killings of women. Daily entertainment in our world. The dead-on contradiction between learning our skills from men & having our own.

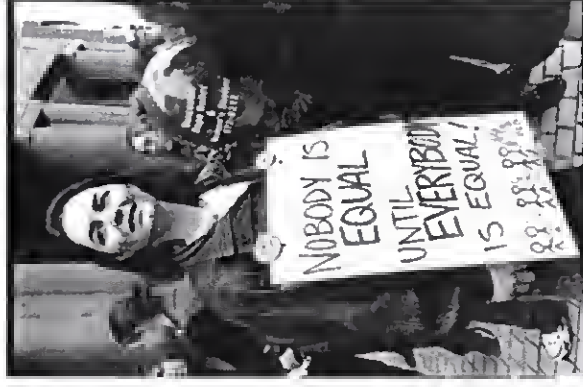
Whether men like it or not—and there are many men of both male right and male left who do not—millions of our sisters have found training camps for themselves within the Maoist revolutions of the capitalist periphery.

J. Sakai has written recently on this: "Over one hundred and fifty years ago, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels challenged capitalism to class war with their opening words in the *Communist Manifesto*: 'A spectre is haunting Europe. It is the spectre of Communism.' Well, today we could say that a spectre is haunting Globalization. Surprising to many, it is the spectre of Maoism."



men and women is not only to be desired but is also historically necessary. This is all the more necessary in producing revolutionary women communist leaders.

Lastly it is important to note Mao's remark "keep being dissatisfied, the world belongs to the dissatisfied." This is all the more true for women revolutionary leaders who have to tread a longer and more complex path of class struggle, inner-party struggle and inner-struggle.







## **“Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?” a review of Parvati’s interview & writing**

*by Burch Lee*

As usual, the squad of local guerrillas were all women. They were armed with only handmade, single-shot muskets of the kind last used by Western armies in the mid-19th century, but were dressed in their green Communist militia uniforms. The squad arrived at a shack and quickly dragged a man outside. Well-known for beating his wife every night, the husband was given a beating himself by the women guerrillas in front of neighbors. Then was warned that any further violence against women or continued alcohol abuse would be bad for him. Women onlookers were invited to reinforce the lesson by contributing punches at him, which some enthusiastically did. For most it was the first time they had ever had a chance to strike back at the violent men who had terrorized their lives. Then the village squad dispersed, another mission completed for the revolutionaries who are the only anti-patriarchal violence police in Nepal.

As usual, when the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the Nepal government held unsuccessful but highly publicized peace talks in 2003, all the negotiators in the room were men. That year comrade Parvati, the senior woman leader in the party and head of the Women’s Department, wrote about the progress of women advancing in the party’s leadership: “*In the United Revolutionary Peoples Council, which is an embryonic central people’s government organizing committee, there are four women out of 37 members.*” So, as usual, a leadership of men has been preparing a new government of men. Parvati added then that as a new goal, the party had ordered that all **leadership** bodies in their party, army, and mass civilian organizations have at least 10% women. The party has at least advanced from the stage of exclusion to the stage of tokenism.

There is an obvious tension between these two realities. And straight up exploring this contradictory terrain inside her own revolution and in past Communism itself, comrade Parvati raises questions that are vital. These two documents that we have — *The Question of Women’s Leadership in People’s War in Nepal* and the *Interview with Com. Parvati* — are a gift, then. A sharing of thought between women who want to be free of capitalism and slavery.

## Police rough up women demanding equal participation

June 19th 2006

Police assaulted and beat up women rights activists and women leaders from a sit-in protest in front of the Singha Durbar on Sunday demanding adequate representation of women in all process carried out by the coalition government.

The rally organized by women wings of seven political parties and several women rights organizations turned into a sit-in protest in front of the Singha Durbar demanding adequate representation of women in all processes being carried out to resolve the problems facing the country.

According to report, central committee leader of Nepali Congress (Democratic) Uma Adhikari was beaten up, while Sashi Shrestha of People's Front Nepal was roughed up by the police.

Several other women including, Meena Pandey, central member of NC, Sarita Giri, central leader of Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandidsvi), Meera Dhungana, advocate at Forum for Women, Law and Development, Sarmla Karki, president of Jagaran Nepal among others were arrested from the sit-in protest programme.

Giri said that women would continue their protest until the seven party alliance ensured women's proportional representation in all the committees including the government's peace negotiation committee and Interim Constitution Drafting Committee.

The arrested women were released after three hours. Women leaders said that they will organize protest programme in Bhadrakali today as well.

Following the formation of a six-member interim constitution drafting committee without participation of women on June 15, women's organisations have criticised the government for being biased towards women.

There are only two women representatives in the 31-member Ceasefire and Code of Conduct National Monitoring Committee and only one state minister in the 20-member cabinet. There is no representation of women from both sides of the talks team.

Meanwhile, agreeing that women have been excluded from the state mechanism, State Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare, Urmila Aryal, promised to make laws to legitimise the proclamation on women.

"We are working on a bill for women rights," she said. She assured the draft would be finalised after discussing among the stakeholders.

Police rough up women demanding equal participation from:  
<http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2006/jun/jun19/news03.php#>

## Interview with Com. Parvati

from *People's March*\*



**PM:** We see women's participation in Nepal's people's war in a very big way. This is a significant achievement. How did the CPN(Maoist) achieve it?

**Parvati:** First, we should notice that in Nepal, the left movement has been quite strong. Because of this factor, leftists have been quite bold in bringing their women to streets, be it revisionists or be it revolutionaries. Now having said that, though we had women coming into the streets, they could not advance mainly because revisionists did not want to go beyond legal struggle and the revolutionary party had not yet undertaken practical implementation of their revolutionary theory. So there was a big gap between theory and practice, so as a result what happened was that the women in their young age were very active, but once they got married they eventually became either the wives of leaders or vanished into oblivion. Thus marriage became a patriarchal left institution for producing good efficient wives for the male communist leaders at the cost of losing women cadres in communist movement. But because the left movement was active, you would get fresh group of women coming and again vanishing. This cycle of vicious circle got asunderd with the initiation of People's War in the year 1996. It unleashed the fury of women so far locked up in legal and trivial struggle.

\* This interview was conducted in 2004, by *People's March* (Volume 5 #10), a magazine close to the Communist Party of India (Maoist). It was available on their website at [www.peoplesmarch.com](http://www.peoplesmarch.com) until May 2006, when the Indian government had it shut down. As we go to press, a new website has been announced, although no material has been uploaded yet. It should be accessible at <http://peoplesmarch.googlepages.com> at some point soon.





*"You can virtually say that women are running peasants' economy in Nepal"*

robs away her labour by denying her right to parental property.

And many times, what happens is that, due to absence of wives from husbands lives for long period they are easily co-wived. There is hardly legal protection as light punishment is given (if complaint is registered) eventually condoning the second marriage. So there is lot of anger ready to burst out which PW is able to tap. Even without organizing them, they would just come because the situation is so bad.

And subjectively, our Party has always been active in women front even when we had not launched PW. We were in fact the first ones to stop the first beauty contest held in Kathmandu in 1990. Similarly regular protests against rape and all kinds of pornography had been held in different parts of Nepal. And we had been regularly celebrating 8th March with political statements. Especially during the Panchayat system\*, when all the political parties were banned, everybody would look forward to 8th March, where they could pour

\* In 1962 - just two years after the first Nepali elections had returned a social-democratic Nepali Congress Party government - king Mahendra abolished all political parties and set up a monarchist dictatorship called the Panchayat system. It was only in 1990 that mass protests led to the Panchayat system being forced to give way to an elected parliament.

**Inner-party struggle may often appear in the form of gender, ethnic, regional struggle. Hence the gender issue becomes quite an important component of the class issue. In such a case dismissing the gender issue as an alien force will ultimately affect class struggle (Com. Parvati)**



**As long as private property remains women will always have to go back to tend individual household activities, maintaining private property for men, no matter how many social revolutions take place. Hence the concept of continuous revolution until one reaches communism has strategic relevance for women ( Com. Parvati)**

**PM:** *Collecting material regarding women's question.*

**Parvati:** Yes we have already translated the material provided to us by your Party. And we have also translated material received from Peru. And we are still looking out for more materials to be translated.

**PM:** *What is the role in cultural organisation. Formally and informally. And how are raising the consciousness at the cultural level?*

**Parvati:** I told you, we have tried to demarcate certain villages as women's model village where we are introducing new cultural values, such as raising children collectively, collecting fodder collectively. We are also creating new culture of celebrating martyrs week, initiation day of PW, birthday of Mao as socially, politically eventful days. We have broken barrier of caste, religion, ethnicity in marriage, today Brahmin cadre is marrying dalit, similarly people from Himalaya are marrying people of Terai region. Today re-marriage is not a taboo. Similarly the concept of impurity attached to menstruation has given away instead it is being looked upon sympathetically\*. With the functioning of local FM radio, creativity of local cadres and masses are being aired in terms of propagating new songs, poems or stories, new developments in agriculture or breeding etc.

**PM:** *What do you feel about the present condition of the International Communist Movement and the women's liberation?*

**Parvati:** I think the present condition of International Communist Movement (ICM) is good specially those one who are coming together on the basis of sound political ideology. And wherever the PW is flourishing backed by matured ICM, women's issues have been given due importance. I think Nepal is one such best example. Similarly experiences of women in countries who are waging PW are enriching the ICM. So it has benefited both.

**PM:** *Greetings to Nepalese people and NCP(Maoist) on behalf of PM.*

---

\* This is a serious issue in much of Nepal, where menstruating women are considered to be "impure" and are forced to leave their home to stay in a hut or shed, sometimes as far as a mile from their home, called a "chhaupadi goth." During this time they are forbidden from eating nutritious food, living only on dry bread and hot peppers, yet they are not excused from work. While excluded in the chhaupadi goth women are particularly vulnerable to attack from wild animals and also from men.

out their political statements. So there has been a culture of the women's movement. One very interesting thing I observed in Nepal is that we don't have male and female divide as much as in western countries or may be even to some extent in India. In our 8th March demonstrations you will find quite number of men shouting slogans along with women. In fact when we go and fight against beauty contests men accompany us.

The most radical rupture the PW was able to bring in women's lives was that it broke women away from the family shackle. This has strong impact on women's lives resulting in unleashing their hidden talents and capabilities. The very act of rebellion against this oldest family institution has set in a chain of reactions. The first chain of reaction is seen in the new marriage system, which is based on love chemistry established in the field of action and the ideological alliance. The second reaction is seen in the way they saw their reproductive function. Earlier even among the communists no matter how many times they may raise their fist for women's liberation and shout against male chauvinism they would eventually go for male lineage, thus pushing their wives to bear male children. Earlier they would have 3, 4, or more children till they had male child or even the most conscious women would have at least two children before the PW started. With the initiation of PW this has changed drastically. The number has been reduced to one. Very rarely you come across two. Also there is no question of waiting for a son now. So, in the Nepal's context, it's a big leap!

With base areas in our strong hold rural areas we are able to practically implement equal rights over parental property. Similarly we are able to give equal status to women, in fact in many cases they are given first priority thus we are able to practice what we preach. We have guaranteed special rights of representation in people's power. We have now number of women model villages called Mahila Namoon village where women have right to their parental property, where they work in co-operative form in their fields, collective fodder collection system, and where they execute construction activities such as making rest houses for travelers, investing their collective money on small productions. So these models show that we are serious about women's issues.

The people's courts too have been instrumental in enhancing women's confidence in PW where the general masses particularly those belonging to oppressed ethnic communities and dalits have been getting quick and fair



judgment against their tormentors under the watchful eyes of the women's militia which give protection to people's court. Earlier not only women but even men had to travel far to fight a case in the court, which meant losing property to pay for the endless procedure of justice, now the people's court is right in front of their villages giving instant judgment.

And another point of attraction is the field of people's army. The militia and People's Liberation Army (PLA) has become an attracting point for women. Earlier the entry point for women in the movement had been mostly through the cultural front. But now the military front has become an attractive point of entry for women to join PW. The very act of joining the military field has tremendous transforming effect on women. All of a sudden from a totally unknown, submissive woman she has now become confident independent fighter. She looks no less smart than urban educated women. She is increasingly becoming political and philosophical. When you are dealing with death and life most of the time, this is bound to happen.

The protracted nature of PW allows women not only to change the society but also change themselves. In a pre-capitalist country like Nepal where absolute monarchy reins the state power, the journey to communism is a long one! The protracted nature of PW allows the revolutionaries, particularly the women revolutionaries whose cultural level is at lower level than male revolutionaries for a long period of transformation.

Our Party considers women as basic revolutionary force (the first to be oppressed and the last to be liberated) who will not only work for revolution but will also fight against counter revolution, thus carrying the banner of continuous revolution. Thus the policy of CPN (Maoist) has been to encourage women's participation in PW.

**PM:** *You were talking about one interesting point, about military and women. Even the bourgeoisie in the past and present day also never allowed women to be part of the military. Communist movements are trying to bring women into the military can you theorize on this? From the beginning the notion of women is - physically weak, muscularity. How do you visualise them being fighters?*

**Parvati:** If we want to fight against bourgeois we should hit them at their weakest point. Their weakest point is women because they say they want to give freedom, equality but in practice they are always deceiving women or at most giving it in form but not in essence. It's not that the bourgeoisie



ing out collection of articles written by senior comrades on women. The Department has been engaged in giving classes to women working on all three fronts at various levels.

**PM:** *What is the specific syllabus for women? Like for general cadre, general masses we are having general political, economical philosophy like that. So for women, what is I think is for those who are working in women's organisation they need to know about the origins of patriarchy, private property land all those things. So that will be a specific syllabus. Otherwise what is the specific syllabus for general women, women working in all fronts.*

**Parvati:** We have a schooling department, which is preparing syllabus for general course such as philosophy, scientific socialism and political economy. Besides this, separate syllabuses are being prepared for women and oppressed nationality. Our efforts have always been to relate women's issues with the political lines that are adopted. For example take the case of developing democracy in the 21st century, which has been adopted by our Central Committee\*, we have to see how this question is linked with the question of status of women.

\* In May 2003 the CPN(M) put forward a resolution for "development of democracy in the 21st century". In this resolution it was categorically stated that, among others, the leadership of the party, army and State should not be centralised in one person as happened in most of the socialist countries in the past. Furthermore, it acknowledged that "question of continuous democratization of the state power leading to the withering away of the state is a thousand times more difficult and complex than capturing state power." (People's Power in Nepal, Parvati)

sion. The PW has given them powerful alternative to live for. Rather than killing themselves every night they have now chance to show that they too can be socially useful, responsible and to live a dignified life and dignified death. Earlier before the PW started we used to solve this problem in a piecemeal manner, but it was not so effective. Today we are also able to identify and punish the traffickers much faster than the old state. Regarding



*Badi women, the most oppressed within the Dalit caste*

tackling liquor problem, once we had movement against liquor consumption at the national level, which forced the then government to meet some of our demands. Since then such activities have been taking place at the local level. We have not banned liquor but have adopted controlling measures, such as punishing those who sold liquor, punishing those who drank in public place, or punishing those who disrupted peace in their drunken state.

**PM:** *To solve the problems and gender based discrimination, what are the organisational efforts, like you have this Women's Department in the party. What is the organisational structure of the Women's Department how does it function?*

**Parvati:** We have women's work at two levels. At the mass level we have women's front known by All Nepalese Women's Organization (Revolutionary) which has its presence throughout the country at various levels. At the other end we have Women's Department directly under the Central Party which is basically a policy making body to develop leadership qualities of women in all the three fronts, the Party, military and the united fronts. So this department is basically a think tank, it is not an organizational structure with hierarchical subdivisions that will function like other fronts. However Women's Departments have been created in PLA, students front as according to the necessity felt by the Party. One may say if Women's Department represents theory then the women's front represent practice. It acts as a bridge between the front and the Party. As earlier mentioned above the Women's Department had issued set of questionnaires relating to their strategic and practical problems, so that a policy paper can be made based on this exercise. Similarly it is preparing study course for women and is bringing



**The very act of joining the military field has tremendous transforming effect on women. All of a sudden from a totally unknown, submissive woman she has now become confident independent fighter.**

don't bring women into such military activities. But not in the same strategic way as we do. They do it as a last resort. And that too as a symbolic act, reducing them to be decorative piece and using them as auxiliary or as reserve force, never taking them as strategic force. Thus they are used in logistics works, as typists, nurses, intelligence operators etc. but rarely used as fighters in the field. I think it is to do with their ideology, because the whole bourgeois system is sustained from women's oppression. They cannot afford to separate women from the kitchen for military operation for too long.

Take the case of Americans, they are deploying women but they seldom send them in the battlefield. There have been one or two cases where women have been sent to the front. But such experience has resulted in diverting men's attention away from the real fight. While not fighting women combatants are looked upon as sexual objects to be gratified and when in combat they are looked upon as weak delicate women to be protected from the harsh fighting life. This results in underestimating the strength of women combatants in both the situations. There was one such case of a woman called Private Jessica Lynch who was captured by Iraqi militia. There was a big propaganda exercise made by USA in its attempt to rescue her as an act of heroism!

**PM:** *I think the bourgeois world also recruited women into the military because of the feminist movement or women's movement. In some services, that too in some gender stereotyped jobs?*

**Parvati:** Yes, most of these Scandinavian countries have done that, because there the women's movement is quite strong.



**PM:** You were telling about the objective conditions and the inevitability of women joining PW. At the same time what are the conscious efforts from the Party's side? Like how did you apply mass line in bringing women into mass organizations and the Party?

**Parvati:** One thing is that from the Party's side there has always been attempt to mobilize women whenever it was possible. In Nepal's context, we have various women related festivals, like Teej, it is the time when women come out and sing songs and dance. Although a religious occasion, this occasion has been used by women to weave their own songs of oppression related to domestic violence, male domination and oppression of women by the feudal culture. This sentiment we took over from them and we started using these platforms to politically educate them in attacking feudal practices. Everywhere in the villages and urban areas these kinds of attempts were made. Secondly, cultural programmes have been encouraged because such programmes attract the attention of women in particular due to its perceptive appeal, which is then used as a means to gain access to their life and to teach them the key issues of poverty which is the cause of their misery and deprivations. In fact women's front has been one of the most active front before PW started. It laid foundation for reaching masses. After the initiation of PW there has been developments in two fronts. In base areas we are consolidating the capacities of women to make them more economically and socially productive by making them literate, involving them in small-scale handy-crafts such as shawl making industry, dry food factories, co-operative farm works, paper making industry etc. We are making them good leaders by involving them in running people's council at different levels. We are involving them in people's court. In white areas we are sending them as organizers and as fighters to mobilize the masses and to protect the masses from the enemies.



*the Teej, a traditional women's festival which has also become an occasion to denounce women's oppression*

RNA is highly sexist in their outlook. This can be reflected in the way they use rape as a means to expose Maoist movement by forcing surrendered women to say that they have been raped and used as sexual instruments by the Maoist men. Such condition was never imposed on male Maoists when they agreed to surrender. So this way they are using rape as an instrument to scare away women from Maoist movement.

**PM:** How are you taking the question of NGOs. NGOs have a very big influence on the society. How you are tackling the question of NGOs in Nepal.

**Parvati:** Earlier we had problem with NGOs but now we don't have much problem with them now. With militarized masses and the instant judgments given by people's court, masses are no longer influenced by the evolutionary, reformed methodology used by the NGOs. On top of it the brutal repression unleashed by the old state machinery leaves them no space for their method of functioning. Their class alliance approach to any problem becomes immediately exposed before Maoists who use class approach to solve problem at the spot.

**PM:** What about the problems in the social sphere like liquor or trafficking of women into India and all those things. How you are tackling them?

**Parvati:** In our country we have a particular community called the Badi community. They are basically dalit class; within dalits also they are the most oppressed community. They were traditionally entertainers for the feudal society. But now with feudalism eroding they have switched into prostitution. Many of them are now joining the PW. Similarly, there is Tamang community in Kavre district near Kathmandu valley, which has been historically providing prostitution for the Ranas in the olden days, and are now providing for the Indian market at present. But the spread of PW and creation of Tamang Mukti Morcha\* has created awareness amongst themselves about the ill effects of their profession. Now the same community are providing good fighters for the PW. From these examples I want to explain that those who are in this profession know very well what is good for them and what is bad for them, but are forced to take this profession out of compulsion.

\* The Tameng Liberation Front. The GPN(M) has encouraged the establishment of different liberation fronts within the different oppressed nations in Nepal. (There are over 30 major "ethnic groups" speaking 100 different languages in Nepal, yet for centuries the Nepali State has tried to impose the Khas nationality, the Hindu religion, and the Nepalese language throughout the country)

**PM:** This also obstructs women's development.

**Parvati:** Gender insensitivity becomes a hindrance when there is unhealthy inner party struggle. In such a situation it can have a very negative impact on women. Women begin to be used against each other, not on the basis of ideology but on the basis of petty personal differences. Instead of discouraging low cultural values that are generally prevalent amongst women they are used to polarize the cadres and masses. Husbands will try to coerce their wives to align with their side, and wives may be lured with power to influence their husbands to switch sides. Marriage itself may become tool to perpetuate unhealthy inner-party struggles whereby women are lured to marry comrades on the basis of not ideological unity but on the basis of increasing the strength or attaining power.

**PM:** Just to co-opt, forcefully co-opt.

**Parvati:** Yes.

**PM:** What is the reaction of the state? Targeting movement physically, militarily to dissuade women from joining the protracted people's war.

**Parvati:** It has become very difficult for the old state to check the movement politically, so they are resorting to brutal means. They are arresting women, raping them, killing them. The RNA\* can't tolerate to see young women fighting and rebelling. In fact they feel loss of masculinity to see women taking arms because they have deep notion that arms are for men to handle and it is the men who are supposed to protect their women. So in the beginning they were raping women to prove impotency of male Maoist fighters. But in the field when they found that women indeed fought bravely, they started taking them seriously as a result they are being killed (and additionally raped) in combat at the same rate as male fighters.

\* RNA: The Royal Nepalese Army

The campaign against liquor has been time and again conducted. Similarly campaign against bar women being used as sexual tools in urban areas have been continuing. Recently our woman front All Nepalese Women's Organization (Revolutionary) gave a nation wide "Band" on the occasion of 8th March in 2004 against rape, torture and murder being perpetrated by the old state and against US intervention in Nepal. This was the first time in Nepalese women's history that a nationwide call was being given by a woman's front. The band was completely successful.

**PM:** In one of the issues of the Worker, there was a write-up on mass line campaign in Nepal. It is very interesting. Please elaborate about this campaign with regard to the women's movement.

**Parvati:** There has been conscious effort by the Party to make new culture in base areas and other strong hold areas. New festivals like People's War initiation day, martyr's week, Mao's birthday are being celebrated with lots of gifts being exchanged. In these activities women are found most active as they run mess, restaurants, selling their products made in small-scale cottage run by the Party. All this give mass character to such celebrations thus preparing ground for more masses to be mobilized on new cultural values. Community based works such as Parma system of exchanging labour in plantation and harvesting seasons which has been in practice for long has been given boost by spreading it in other fields such as collecting fodders, and fuels from forest. Much old culture activity has been adopted with new inputs and with progressive values imparted. Take the case of Mayur dance in Rukum, Rolpa, which is exclusively men's dance today even women are participating in it. There has also been campaign to militarize the masses. This we are able to do so more efficiently because we have strong women's militia present in our strong hold areas. In far western region we have even cultural company which gives their programs as they march along, thus giving cultural programme a mass and military appearance. This campaign has become so popular that the old state is propagating their joining this campaign and other militia programme as abductions and kidnappings done by Maoists. We have also developed the concept of one member, one house; one village one organization thereby multiplying our memberships in mass fronts. Today most of our women fronts are not only self sufficient but have more money with them because our women are not only actively engaged in productive works but also are good at keeping good records of its saving without wanton spending.





**Parvati:** Let us be very clear inner party struggle is there in every healthy functioning Party. The point is how to identify such struggles in the field of women and gender relations within the Party. Let me tell you one example of how to understand the attitude of communists towards women in communist movement. There is one section who consider their participation as having strategic importance and constituting of basic revolutionary class. They are willing to accept and guarantee special rights of women. And hence strives to transform the structure of the Party, the women and gender relation based on this principle. There is another section who may agree this in principle, but in practice sees women as secondary force thus relegating them as practically necessary for mobilizing the masses. For such people, any changes they try to bring in organization structure or women or gender relation will be cosmetic, formal and skin-deep. For example let us take the question of remarriage. Everybody agrees with it. But in specific issues the differences crop up showing differences in outlook. Take the example of the definition of family of martyr. We place high value on celebrating martyr's week programme in Nepal where we invite families of martyrs to give

speeches and to give them gifts. There was a debate whether once martyr's family remarried (with the notice of the Party) if he or she had the right to represent as martyr's family on martyr's week programme. Those with conservative out look had tough time accepting them as martyr's family.

Similarly, there is tendency of taking women's leadership formally, as some thing imposed by the Party. In such case higher authority (specially males) will not take pain to help women to exercise their leadership in the organization they are leading. As a result women have to struggle doubly to establish their leadership in their respective fields. Firstly, to gain recognition. Secondly, to exercise her leadership. But those who take women's participation strategically they have been found very sympathetic, and willing to wait for the development of leadership qualities in women.

**PM:** *What about the inner struggle you are mentioning? Are you telling about the struggle with the self?*

**Parvati:** No, self-struggle everybody has to undergo as a routine, be it in revolutionary life or evolutionary life. Let me be specific about inner struggle although I have mentioned it above! One thing we must understand is that the main tendency in most of the Parties, which is undertaking PW in this difficult unipolar world, is generally the rightist tendency. Having said that, rightists cannot come in a bold way (as they can be easily exposed), so they take the form of dogmato-revisionist tendency. Let's take the question of reproduction in revolutionary life. The rightists will say I want to take a break from revolutionary life because I want to bear children. Such blatant statement would draw the attention of the cadres as being rightists and finding excuses for running away from the movement. So how does one hide this? By being dogmato-revisionist. The dogmato-revisionist tendency is seen by romanticizing the bearing of children as yet another front where women can prove their mettle in class struggle. But in practice, all this revolutionary romanticism looses

